



DELHI UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. 0132

F31

Ac. No. 27972

Date of release for loan

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 5 Paise will be collected for each day the book is kept overtime.

THE
Masterpiece Library
of Short Stories

*The Thousand Best Complete
Tales of all Times and
all Countries*

Selected by

AN INTERNATIONAL BOARD
OF EMINENT CRITICS

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, LL.D.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

Clement Shorter

George Saintsbury, LL.D.

Richard le Gallienne

Brander Matthews, Litt.D.

Sir Frederick Wedmore

Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B., LL.D.

W. P. Trent, LL.D.

Carl Van Doren

Thomas Seecombe

Edited by

Sir J. A. Hammerton

I. EARLY STORIES

LONDON

THE EDUCATIONAL BOOK COMPANY LIMITED

**Special Edition in 10 double-volumes
issued by Allied Newspapers, Ltd.,
in association with The Educational
Book Co. Ltd.**

Editorial Board

Richard le Gallienne

Author and critic. Author of "The Book-Bills of Narcissus," "Prose Fancies," "Retrospective Reviews," "Rudyard Kipling: a Criticism." For many years engaged in literary and journalistic work in the U.S.A.

Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B., LL.D.

Critic, biographer and poet. Librarian of House of Lords 1904-1914, Clark Lecturer in English Literature at Cambridge University and translator to Board of Trade. Was in 1913 crowned by the French Academy. Author of many notable books in prose and verse.

Sir John Hammerton

Author and editor. Author of "George Meredith: His Life and Art," "Stevensoniana," "English Humorists of To-day," "Barrie: the Story of a Genius," editor of the New Punch Library, Charles Dickens Library, the Fine Art Scott, the World's Great Books.

Professor Brander Matthews, Litt.D., D.C.L.

Professor of Literature 1892-1900, and Professor of Dramatic Literature, 1900-24, Columbia University, wrote much on fiction and the drama, including "Aspects of Fiction," "The Historical Novel," "Molière: his Life and Work."

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

Critic and journalist. Founder and editor of "The British Weekly" and "The Bookman." Edited the complete works of Charlotte Brontë. Author of "A Bookman's Letters," "The Problem of Edwin Drood," "The Daybook of Claudius Clear."

Professor Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, M.A., Litt.D.

King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, Cambridge University. Author of "Adventures in Criticism," "On the Art of Writing," and many works of fiction, poems and ballads.

Professor George Saintsbury, M.A. LL.D., D.Litt.

For twenty years Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature, Edinburgh University. Author of "History of Criticism," "Nineteenth Century Literature," "The English Novel," "Fiction Novelists," "History of the French Novel," "The Flourishing of Romance."

Professor Thomas Seacombe, M.A.

Professor in English, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1921-23. Lecturer at Owens and East London Colleges, assistant editor Dictionary of National Biography, author of "The Bookman History of English Literature."

Clement K. Shorter

Literary critic, biographer and editor. Author of "Charlotte Brontë and her Circle," "The Brontës: Life and Letters," "George Borrow." Founded "The Sketch" and "The Sphere," and was for many years editor of "The Illustrated London News."

Professor W. P. Trent, LL.D., D.C.L.

Emeritus Professor of English Literature, Columbia University, U.S.A. Editor "Balzac's Comédie Humaine," "Poems and Tales of E. A. Poe," author of "History of American Literature," "Authority of Criticism," "Introduction to the English Classics," "Biography of Defoe (10 vols.)"

Carl van Doren, Ph.D.

Author, critic, editor. Associate Professor in English at Columbia University, New York, since 1916. Author of "Life of Thomas Love Peacock," "Contemporary American Novelists," and co-editor of "The Cambridge History of American Literature."

Sir Frederick Wedmore

Critic and author. His works included "The Life of Balzac," and "On Books and Arts." He was also the writer of many brilliant short stories.

Editorial Note

A SHORT story may be a mere anecdote of three hundred words or a work of ten or fifteen thousand. In content it may be anything from a glimpse of character, an incident, to a highly finished picture of life. But it should be a complete work of imagination, its effect achieved with a minimum of personages and events.

TO select the best thousand examples was a task that could be achieved only on arbitrary lines. As to length, three thousand words was the ideal average, but this excluded some of the finest stories, so exceptions had to be allowed. National characteristics also had consideration. Another test was the value of a story as illustrating the development of the art.

PROBLEMS of arrangement were not entirely solved by classification according to the country of each writer's origin. This puts Richard Steele into the Irish volume and separates those ideal literary partners Agnes and Egerton Castle. But it is the best possible arrangement for the work, and the index makes reference easy. The inclusion of a series of stories of the War became possible when the War itself ruled out all modern German work.

A WORD as to the method of selection. The General Editor prepared a trial list of titles which were submitted to all the members of the Editorial Board, who rejected and added according to their individual tastes and knowledge. These individual lists were then collated and the final list evolved. The thousand stories selected are therefore representative of the combined opinion of the whole group of editors. A very few modifications of the final list were made necessary by difficulties of copyright and considerations of Anglo-Saxon taste in certain translations from foreign literatures.

MOST of the foreign stories have been specially translated, and all copyrights, in both stories and translations, the use of which authors and publishers have courteously permitted, are duly credited at the end of each volume.

J. A. H.

Contents of Volume I

	PAGE
Introductory Essay <i>Edward Wright</i>	II

EGYPTIAN

I. The Tale of Khafri <i>King Khafri</i>	27
II. The Tale of Ahuri <i>Ziharpto</i>	29

INDIAN

III. The Monkey and the Queen's Jewels <i>The Buddha</i>	35
IV. The Tale of the Princess Sambula "	39
V. The Ass in the Lion's Skin "	45
VI. The Talkative Tortoise "	46
VII. The Judgment of the Buddha "	48
VIII. The Brahman of Vain Dreams <i>The Pancha-Tantra</i>	50
IX. The Rajah's Son and the Merchant's Wife <i>The Hitopadesa</i>	52
X. The Faithful Servant " "	54

CLASSICAL

XI. The Treasure of King Rhampsinitus <i>Herodotus</i>	57
XII. Polycrates and his Ring "	60
XIII. The Ladies of Syracuse <i>Theocritus</i>	62
XIV. The Widow of Ephesus <i>Petronius</i>	67
XV. Cupid and Psyche <i>Apuleius</i>	70
XVI. Tragic Love <i>Heliodorus</i>	94

HEBREW LITERATURE

XVII. Tobit	102
XVIII. Susanna and the Elders	116
XIX. Bel and the Dragon	119

CONTENTS

CHINESE

		PAGE
xx.	The Peach-Blossom Fountain . . . <i>Tao Chien</i> . . .	122 v
xxi.	The Lute-Girl's Lament . . . <i>Pō Chū-Yi</i> . . .	124 r

CELTIC

xxii.	The Fate of Deirdre	126 ^p _c
xxiii.	The Dream of Maxen Wledig	132 t
xxiv.	Queen Guenever's Maying . . . <i>Sir Thomas Malory</i>	140 _p ^r

MEDIÆVAL FRENCH

xxv.	The Tale of King Coustans the Emperor	148
xxvi.	Aucassin and Nicolette . . . <i>Old Antif</i> . . .	158

MEDIÆVAL ITALIAN

xxvii.	King Philip and his Greek Slave	183
xxviii.	The Hermit and the Treasure	185
xxix.	The Husband of Aglaes . . . " <i>Gesta Romanorum</i> "	187
xxx.	Theodosius of Rome	191 _L
xxxi.	The Three Caskets	193 _r
xxxii.	The Humbling of Jovian	198
xxxiii.	The Three Maxims	204 _r
xxxiv.	The Knights of Egypt and Baldac	207
xxxv.	The Faithful Knight, or, Guido and Tyrius	210

SCANDINAVIAN

xxxvi.	The Werewolf	217 _c
xxxvii.	The Story of Frithiof the Bold	227
xxxviii.	The Ness King	252
xxxix.	Glob and Alger	260

ARABIAN

xl.	The Fisherman and the Genie . . . " <i>Arabian Nights</i> "	266 _v
xli.	The Story of the One-Eyed Calender	269 _v
xlii.	Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves	280 _v
xliii.	The Story of the Little Hunchback	298 _v

CONTENTS

PERSIAN

	PAG
XLIV. The Pilgrim and the Robbers	304
XLV. The Kazi of Emessa	305
XLVI. The Envious Vizier	317

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

XLVII. Story of the Three Rings	<i>Giovanni Boccaccio</i> .	316
XLVIII. Gillette of Narbonne	" "	327
XLIX. Tancred, Prince of Salerno	" "	327
L. Cymon and Iphigenia	" "	331
LI. Anastasio	" "	341
LII. Federigo and the Falcon	" "	345
LIII. The Patient Griselda	" "	349
LIV. Messer Bernabo of Milan	<i>Franco Sacchetti</i> .	357
LV. The Blind Beggar of Orvieto	" "	361
LVI. Michelozzo and the Asses	" "	366
LVII. The Love Tale of Galgano and Minoccia	<i>Ser Giovanni</i> .	370
LVIII. Bucciolo and his Tutor	" "	374



THE EARLY STORY-TELLERS

It is doubtful if any other form of art has so long, interesting, and picturesque a history as the Short Story. It is one of the most important elements in the fabric of human life. It is the medium of the highest spiritual gospel: it is the chief weapon of all great reformers since at least the days of the Buddha: it is the source from which Shakespeare drew much of his inspiration; and though it changes in outward fashion from age to age, the art of the short story will not vanish until man does. For it is as perennial as life itself. To trace its origin, we should have to go back to the time when some strange, curious, ape-like creatures came down from the shelter of the forest trees and began to communicate with each other in articulate speech.

We cannot go back as far as that. But in the tales told by the nomad Bushmen of the South African desert, and by the black fellows of the Australian wilderness, we can get fairly close to the brief prose tale in its primitive form. And in this stage it is far from being a trivial thing. A modern man would be surprised by its importance, if he were unacquainted with the weird, shifting world of imagination in which the lower savages fearfully live. Many a wild, wandering hunter would give his finest weapon—the thing by which he wins food for himself and family—to learn some of these tales from the cunning old men who keep the tribal mysteries. For to him the tales are of high practical value. They contain magical secrets, by means of which a man can become the master of the whole world, and call the rain-clouds up to him, and charm the birds of the air and the beasts of the wood, and bring them all within his power.

Then there are stories that give a man a wonderful knowledge of the gods and spirits and totems; and with this knowledge he can make them all his servants. So he becomes the medicine-man or witch-doctor of his tribe. From the white frozen wastes around the Pole, where the Eskimo ranges, to the hot, steaming forests of the Congo, where the pigmy moves like a shadow through the bush, the magical art of the short story flourishes. And alongside this development of superstition, the kindly play of humorous fancy and interest in the character of one's neighbours goes on. The common people, dragooned and oppressed and terrified by their chiefs, elders, and witch-doctors, turn for relief to the short story, and weave around their camp-fires amusing and satirical anecdotes about some humble creature of the wilds who triumphs over all his powerful enemies. So we get that brilliant, shrewd, and entertaining series of little animal stories, where the rabbit, the fox, or some other small animal wins by trick and cunning what he cannot gain by force. The American Negro tales of Brer Rabbit are classic examples of this form of the primitive short story.

Many of our old genuine fairy-tales have come down to us from the Stone Ages. That is why they appeal so delightfully to the minds of children. The imagination of the savage and the child are partly of the same power and quality. They float in a world of wonder, in which the wildest wishes become realities and the most impossible fancies wear the look of truth, especially when they are given form and substance by the art of the story-teller. But what is only a charming entertainment to our children was often a solemn belief to our barbaric forefathers two thousand years ago. The talking animals of our fairy-tales, for instance, are faint, outworn traditions of the mysterious guardian spirits, who assumed the shape of beasts and watched over the tribesmen who revered them as totems. "Puss-in-Boots" in his first form may have been the sacred totem of the Wild Cat clan; and quite likely the original beast in "Beauty and the Beast" was also one of these animal deities who fell in love with a mortal maiden, and was under a taboo not to reveal himself in human shape.

Thus the fairy-tale has a curious importance in the history of both savage and civilised races. Unhappily, many of the best known and prettiest of these tales have been worked over by brilliant French men and women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. So they have become neither one thing nor the other. It is best to go back to the earliest, genuine source of stories of magic and enchantment; and surprisingly early in date is the tale with which we open.

About 6800 years ago—according to one method of reckoning—

Khufu, or Cheops, the greatest of the pyramid-builders, was lord of Egypt. Egypt was then a land with a high civilisation, a great school of builders and sculptors, and royal lovers of literature. It was Khufu's custom to call his sons round his throne and bid them tell him tales of the old magicians. The stories were recorded in their present shape by a scribe who lived about 3459 B.C.; but he attributes the first tale to King Khafri—the successor to Cheops and the second of the great pyramid-builders. Khafri may have reigned 1500 years before the scribe. Thus the modern short-story writer can claim one of the most ancient kings in the world as the father of his art—one who lived long before Homer or any known poet.

THE TALE OF KHAfri

Khafri came of a line that intended to take over the priesthood of the sun-god, and make themselves the popes as well as the monarchs of their people. Perhaps the trouble that Khafri took to collect the traditions of the magicians was part of a political scheme. He wanted to know as much as the priests did about the superstitious practices and hypnotic spells that were still used in Egyptian religion. The tale he relates is like its author. There is more in it than appears on the surface. It seems to be a common story of an unfaithful wife and an avenging husband. But fully understood, it is one of the great documents of civilisation. In primitive Egypt the women held the property, and all a man earned or inherited was made over to his wife. It was the age of what is known as mother-right. Possibly woman, having invented farming while man was hunting for food for the family, kept agriculture and its profits in her hands. When she wanted to marry, she sent a man a gift of clothes, as the woman does in Khafri's tale. When she tired of one husband, she obtained another by a second gift of clothing—a method of wooing followed by some savage girls at the present day.

The priestesses of Amon retained this privilege of choosing their spouses for some thousands of years. But the general laws of marriage and property were changed when kingship was established in Egypt—possibly by a virile race of invaders. Thus the erring wife in Khafri's tale is not a common offender, but the militant suffragette of her time, contending for the revival of the old woman's rights. But the husband puts a crocodile in the lake where her lover comes to bathe, and the wife is burnt at the stake, to discourage other women from attempting to revert to an obsolete custom.

THE TALE OF AHURI

The next Egyptian story, "The Tale of Ahuri," carries us down to the days of Rameses the Great, under whose rule Moses possibly lived.

The manuscript is in the writing of the late Greek period of Egyptian history, but the story dates back to 1320 B.C. Prince Setna, a son of Rameses, has the same ambition as Khafri had, and he sets out to gather the magical secrets of the priesthood. In particular, he seeks after a book of magic written by the god Thoth, by which a man could learn the speech of all living creatures and bend the heavens and earth to his will. In his search, Setna breaks open a kingly tomb, and finds it inhabited by the spirits of a royal brother and sister, who in their lifetime had also sought after the book of Thoth. It rests by their side. But when Setna stoops to take it, Princess Ahuri bids him listen to the tale of her life, in which she tells how Thoth took vengeance upon her and her brother when they tried to use his book. Possibly the tale was written by some priestly scribe with a view to deterring some prince like Setna from prying too closely into the secrets of hypnotic suggestion, by means of which the Egyptian sorcerers performed their apparent miracles.

In addition to this curious study in magic, there is a strange human interest in "Ahuri's Tale." Most readers will be repelled by it. For the romance in the life of the Princess turns on the difficulties put in her way when she fell in love with her brother and wished to marry him. But we must bear in mind that in her own eyes she was a virtuous heroine. The ancient Egyptians favoured brother and sister marriages, especially in their royal family. Even in modern Egypt it is a man's duty to marry his first cousin or some one in the family. Ahuri's father objected to her following the usual custom, merely because he wanted to found two lines of descendants. Having only two children, he desired the girl to marry a general's son, and the boy to marry a general's daughter. The marriage of Ahuri to her brother left only one line of royal descendants, and endangered the succession to the throne. Such was the native view of this extraordinary story.

STORIES OF THE BUDDHA

Between the time when Ahuri lived and the time when her story was written in its present shape, a new form of the short prose tale was developed during a popular movement of religion in Ancient India. Gautama, the son of a chieftain in South Nepal, arose in the sixth century B.C., with a democratic, mystical creed, that he preached alike to king and pariah, with a view to uniting all castes in a common system of spiritual salvation. He became known as the Buddha, or Enlightened One, and none of the high-caste orthodox priests was able to appeal to the minds of the people as he did. Possessing a shrewd wit and a telling humour, he drove home his ideas by means of entertaining fables

and tales—such as the quaint and surprising story of “The Monkey and the Queen’s Jewels,” and the charming “Tale of the Princess Sambula.” His disciples adopted this method of preaching, and almost every popular story in Northern India—to the number of five hundred and fifty—was adapted by the Buddhists and collected after the death of the great reformer.

The tales spread from India to Persia and from Syria to Greece; and some of them were transcribed by Planudes, a Greek monk, in the fourteenth century, and attributed by him to Aesop. Thus under the forged title of *Aesop’s Fables* a few of the shorter and lighter animal stories told by the Buddha have become a popular element in our culture. But as will be seen by a reference to the original fable of “The Ass in the Lion’s Skin,” the ancient version remains superior to its various modern recensions. As Buddha told the tale, it is a vivid little picture of Hindu village life, with no shadow of improbability about it. Even in fables in which birds and animals use human speech—such as “The Talkative Tortoise”—the thing happens in a reasonable manner. For it is connected with the central doctrine of the Buddhist creed. According to Buddha, when a man dies he is born again. If he has been very wicked, he comes to life as a deadly snake or a wild beast, or something still more dreadful. But if he has accumulated a store of good actions, he is born to high rank and wealth. All life is one, and a holy man like the Buddha could win such spiritual power as to be able to remember his former births. The original stories indeed profess to be a record of the five hundred and fifty and more births of the Buddha and of his experiences in animal, bird, and human form. So these tales are known as the “Jatakas” or “Birth Stories.” One of them—“The Judgment of the Buddha”—is an interesting problem. It is practically identical with the Scriptural story of the “Judgment of Solomon,” and scholars are still disputing whether the Hindus came into contact with the Hebrews during the Babylonian Captivity.

THE PANCHA-TANTRA

When the Buddhist’s tales were written down, somewhere about 350 B.C., the orthodox, priestly Brahmins, who stood for the old caste system, suddenly became aware of the literary value and lively charm of the “Birth Stories.” With a view to combating the growing influence of the new sect, the Brahmins stole some of the best tales, and made a book of them, entitled the *Pancha-tantra*. This dates back to 200 B.C., and it contains the remarkable character study and amusing narrative of “The Brahmin of Vain Dreams.” This is clearly a Buddhist satire

on the gluttony and foolishness of the orthodox high-caste priesthood, and it is surprising that the priests themselves should have included it in their version. Probably they could not resist its humour.

TALES FROM THE HITOPADESA

The Brahmins did not appeal to the people, but aimed at overthrowing their rivals by winning over kings and inducing them to drive the Buddhists from India at the point of the sword. And to gain the favour of the men of royal rank, they used some of the stories they took from the Buddhists in compiling a work of statecraft, known as the *Hitopadesa*, or book of princely instruction. The tale of "The Rajah's Son and the Merchant's Wife" is a good example of the pieces in this book. It gives a rather low view of human nature, especially of feminine human nature. The attacks on the character of women contained in all these Hindu tales exerted for some thousands of years an influence upon the European mind, and assisted in bringing about that slanderous view of the character of the mothers of our race that largely prevailed in the Middle Ages. "The Faithful Servant," from the same Sanscrit classic, moves in a higher moral atmosphere, and though the miraculous element seems absurd to Western readers, it must be remembered that to the people for whom it was written it would not by any means appear ridiculous.

POLYCRATES AND HIS RING—THE TREASURE OF RHAMP-SINITUS

Even in the lifetime of the Buddha, the leaders of Western civilisation had little to learn from the Hindu ascetics in regard to the frailty of women. For the ancient Greeks had a remarkable collection of anecdotes of a loose kind, which were known as Milesian Tales. They arose amid the luxury and licence of manners in the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and a lost work by Aristides contained many of them. But it is to another Asiatic Greek, Herodotus, born in Halicarnassus about 490 B.C., that we owe our earliest extant examples of the short tale in Greek prose. He wandered about the ancient world, talking with every man of importance he met, and recorded all the stories in his famous history, written when he settled in Italy. His kinsmen had been killed by a Greek tyrant in Asia, and this perhaps led him to write with a vehement passion for free government. In the tale of "Polycrates and his Ring" he gives a dramatic legend of one of the old Greek tyrants who made himself hated by his freedom-loving race. But his masterpiece in the art of the short story is "The Treasure of King Rhampsinitus." It is a tradition of Rameses the Great, and was no doubt told to the writer by one of the Egyptian priests he met in his travels in the Fayum.

THE LADIES OF SYRACUSE

None of the Athenians in the Golden Age of Greek literature wrote any prose tales that have come down to us. They were occupied almost entirely with the drama, the study of history and philosophy. It is from Sicily in the Silver Age of Greek letters that we get our first short story of actual life from the hand of a great writer—Theocritus. He was born at Syracuse about 300 B.C., and in his sketch of "The Ladies of Syracuse" he gives a fresh, charming, and lively picture of the life of his native city. The plot is very slight, but the character-drawing and the beauty of the diction make it a thing of gold. Even Anatole France has done nothing finer; for it has the best qualities of the modern French *conte*, together with an exquisite loveliness beyond the reach of any modern novelist.

THE WIDOW OF EPHEBUS

The amazing Greeks were our masters in every form of art. We excel them only where they did not compete with us, as in the long novel of manners with a well-defined plot. Yet even here the classic writers have some astonishing things to show us what they could have done had they wished. The modern realistic tale is a timid study of the depths of life in comparison with the works of some of the later Greek and Latin authors. Petronius, the brilliant libertine dandy of Rome who taught Nero his worst vices and committed suicide when he fell out of favour, wrote a satirical romance, of which two chapters have come down to us. In these is embedded a little jewel of ironic humour—"The Widow of Ephesus." It is probably a late version of one of the Milesian Tales that originated in Asia Minor. There is a still more amusing short story in the work of Petronius; but by reason of its character it cannot be included in a collection of tales for the general reader of modern times.

For the same reason we have had to exclude the "True Story" by Lucian—the most brilliant of all satirists, ancient and modern. He was born about 125 A.D. at Samosata in Syria. Lucian was the solvent of his age—a witty, brilliant sceptic who laughed at everything, and prepared the way for the triumph of Christianity by bringing all the current forms of Pagan belief to ridicule.

CUPID AND PSYCHE

Opposed to Lucian was a contemporary Latin writer, Apuleius, who was also born about 125 A.D. at Madaura in Northern Africa. Apuleius was a man of wealth who wandered about Asia enquiring into the mystic religions against which the Christians were struggling. In his gay, picturesque, rambling romance, "The Golden Ass," he shows a strong

leaning to the worship of Isis, and in the short story, "Cupid and Psyche," he takes up a charming old folk-tale and transforms it into one of the loveliest and most spiritual things in the history of fiction. For there can be little doubt that Psyche represents the human soul wooed by the Spirit of Divine Love.

TRAGIC LOVE, OR CNEMON'S STORY

It is strange to pass from the last of the Pagan story-tellers to the first of the Christian writers of romance, and find that the best short tale by Bishop Heliodorus is far more heathen in character than "Cupid and Psyche." Heliodorus lived towards the end of the fourth century of the present era. He is said to have been Bishop of Tricca, and a late tradition runs that a synod gave him the choice either to burn his romance or renounce his bishopric; the prelate preferred to keep his book from the flames. His short story of "Cnemon," which has here been entitled "Tragic Love," is remarkably well told. The extraordinary situation, derived from the old legend of Phaedra and Hippolytus, is developed in a rapid dramatic manner, the dialogue is natural and easy, and the characters are drawn in swift and expressive strokes. The longer love romance by the same writer is much inferior to his shorter work; it is verbose, intricate and dull in parts. The dreadful atmosphere of dullness rests on most of the Greek romances written by later writers. Only Longus in his lovely pastoral, "Daphnis and Chloe," infuses life and beauty and freshness into the declining art of fiction; but the work of Longus is a novel rather than a short story.

In the meantime, the great sacred writers of the Hebrews had built up in the Old Testament a monument of religious literature without parallel in the world. Besides containing the highest and clearest revelation of the Divine Power in the universe, the more ancient part of our Bible was a magnificent collection of poetry, drama, and narrative. The man who wrote the Book of Job was a greater poet than Aeschylus, Milton, or Dante; the scribe who set forth the Book of Ruth was one of the supreme masters in the art of narration. But it is in the New Testament that the loveliest of all short stories appear. Even as Jesus was greater than Buddha in spiritual things, so was He a more powerful, direct, and winning preacher. Appealing to the lowly, the poor and outcast, He spoke with a divine simplicity and power that make His parables the consummate flower of the art of narration. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is most beautiful as a work of art as well as a message of hope and joy to the sinner sunk in actual misery by his sin. And the story of the woman taken in adultery, which reveals so overwhelming

and yet divinely pitiful a view of the weakness of all human nature, is perhaps the finest short story in the world. If our modern Theosophists and modern Buddhists would but study the Bible of their fathers with the attention they devote to the obscure and inartistic productions of the Indian mind, they would find that, both as literature and as a vehicle for the highest spiritual teaching, the Bible is incomparable.

TOBIT, SUSANNA, AND BEL AND THE DRAGON

Even in the books which some of the Reformed Churches regard as uncanonical, there are admirable examples of the narrative art of the Hebrews ; and it is from these that we have taken the stories of " Tobit," and " Susanna," and " Bel and the Dragon." The three narratives were probably composed in the second and first centuries before Christ, but the traditions on which they are built go back some hundreds of years to the days of the Assyrian captivity. The story of Susanna is now the most famous of these three stories. It is thought to have been written in its present form about 100 B.C., when Simon ben Shetach was president of the Sanhedrin. Simon was anxious to reform the criminal law, especially in regard to false witnesses. His own son was falsely accused of a capital offence, and he let him die in the hope that the death of an innocent man would help him to save many more innocent lives. And it may have been Simon himself who brought out the old story of Susanna, after the death of his son, with a view to influencing public opinion, and getting a law passed that all perjurers should undergo the punishment that might have fallen on the person they wrongly accused.

THE PEACH-BLOSSOM FOUNTAIN—THE LUTE-GIRL'S LAMENT

Unlike the nations of the old Mediterranean world, the ancient Chinese were not distinguished by their mastery of the narrative arts. Both the novels and the dramas of China are of modern origin, and even now they are scarcely regarded as literature by the Chinese scholars. The earliest masterpiece of the Chinese story-teller is the charming, delicate allegory, " The Peach-Blossom Fountain," written by Tao Chien in his old age, about 420 A.D. He was a lover of good wine and country-life, and his enchanted land with its exquisite beauty is merely the ordinary world as he saw it in memory with the magic eyes of youth. There is more drama and quite as much beauty in " The Lute-Girl's Lament," by another famous Chinese writer, Pō Chū-Yi, born in 772 A.D. He rose to high office in the state, and afterwards was banished to a petty post, where he gave himself up to poetry and philosophy. While he

was travelling to his post of banishment he fell ill, and met on the river the deserted lute-girl, whose sad life he so beautifully depicts. This little work is accounted one of the highest things in the literature of his country ; such is the exquisiteness of its original diction, that an admiring critic says that it wrought him into the state of ecstasy that the Buddhists practise.

THE FATE OF DEIRDRE

In our country in the Middle Ages there was floating about a far larger number of vivid tales of every king than those which remained un-gathered in China. From the days of the Norman Kings to the days of the Tudors, all the material accumulated by the story-tellers of the world—Hindus, Persians, Arabs, Syrians, and even Egyptians—was carried across Europe and woven into the fabric of the common culture of Christendom. The bards of Ireland in the seventh century were the first to produce a tale of immortal beauty in "The Fate of Deirdre." This is one of the high things of man's making. Deirdre herself ranks beside Helen of Troy and Gudrun of Iceland ; but she has not yet found a man of fine genius to cast her lovely, tragic story into a classic form of art. We must wait for this until Ireland produces a great narrative poet or a great dramatic master of music.

THE DREAM OF MAXEN WLEDIG

While the Gaels of Erin were moulding their national stories roughly into shape, the Cymri of Wales were developing their splendid body of myth and romance. A striking example of the early Welsh mythic romance is "The Dream of Maxen Wledig"—which is one of the tales by the old Welsh bards that Lady Charlotte Guest translated under the title of the *Mabinogion*. It is a very faint portrait of the Roman Emperor Maximus, seen through the haze of the fairy-tale and the romance of the later age of chivalry.

QUEEN GUENEVER'S MAYING

Far more interesting, however, are the stories of King Arthur and his knights. These were first formed on a base of historic fact by the bards of Cornwall, South Wales, and Strathclyde, towards the end of the sixth century. Coloured with romance, they passed to the Welsh-speaking people of Brittany, and they were afterwards taken over by the minstrels of Normandy and spread through France and Italy. Some of the Arthurian tales of the Welsh bards are found in the *Mabinogion* ; but the more important romances have been worked over by Norman and Breton poets of the twelfth century, and finely transformed

by them into the supreme literature of Christian chivalry. • The best stories are Welsh in structure but French in spirit, like the earliest tale of Lancelot, "The Knight of the Cart," composed by Chrestien de Troyes about 1164. We possess an exquisite version of this story in "Queen Guenever's Maying," from the *Morte D'Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. Malory wove the works of the old French poets into a magnificent prose epic in the fifteenth century, but all his tales are more ancient than his day.

THE TALE OF KING COUSTANS

It was the French who carried the vogue of the Arthurian romances into Germany, where, long afterwards, Wagner dramatised the best of them and set it to music. The French also took over the romances of the Greeks of Byzantium, with which they became familiar during the first two Crusades. Permanent bonds of culture were established between the French and the Greeks by intermarriage, commerce, and the conquest of Constantinople, and many Greek tales of which the originals are now lost survive—like that of "King Coustans"—in a French version. This famous tale of the man who was born to be king has spread to Arabia and Abyssinia, and become part of the folklore of Europe. It was composed in French in the twelfth century.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

Towards the end of that century there was a French minstrel of Hainault, who, it has but recently been discovered, is one of the supreme masters of literature. From a new reading of the manuscript, his name seems to have been Old Antif, and his work is the exquisite song-story "Aucassin and Nicolette," that bears comparison with "Romeo and Juliet" as a love-tale of immortal beauty. The story is of Moorish origin; for Aucassin bears, in a slightly altered form, the name of a Mohammedan ruler of Cordova in the eleventh century, and the curious manner of telling a tale partly in verse and partly in prose is also a Mohammedan characteristic. Perhaps Old Antif fell into the hands of Moorish pirates, and as a slave learnt their ways. He has, too, a first-hand knowledge of Provence, where he stages the tale. For he remembers the strange, scandalous allegation made against the people of Aigue-Mortes that the men lay in child-bed when their wives had children. The Basques of the Pyrenees used to do this in ancient times, and savages in various parts of the world still act like the King of Torelore in "Aucassin and Nicolette." The English rendering of this famous romance given in our collection is the work of the present writer.

TALES FROM THE "GESTA ROMANORUM"

While Old Antif and other minstrels were entertaining the castle folk with romances of chivalry, the parsons and friars were using the short story to attract the people to church, where the sermon became in many instances as picturesque and lively a vehicle of religious instruction as the miracle play. Everything of quick, human interest was matter for the popular art of the preachers. They took an Oriental apologue, like "The Hermit and the Treasure," which an unknown Italian first published, and gave it a Christian air and a brilliant concision. They ransacked the remains of antiquity for stories, and developed charming legends, such as we find in "King Philip and his Greek Slave," and in "The Humbling of Jovinian," which latter is a version of the well-known tale of King Robert of Sicily. From a collection of Arabian stories made by Petrus Alphonsus, a Christian Jew who rose to high honour in Spain in the eleventh century, they obtained the beautiful story of "The Knights of Egypt and Baldac"—the last word being mediaeval English for Bagdad, the romantic scene of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. And from the English legend of Guy, Earl of Warwick, the story of "Guido and Tyrius" was derived.

A hundred and more of these tales were formed into a book entitled *Gesta Romanorum*; and very likely it was an Englishman who produced this famous work towards the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth. Among the stories included in it are the delightful romance of "The Husband of Aglaes," and "The Three Caskets" that Shakespeare used in "The Merchant of Venice." The ingenious "Three Maxims" is an excellent version of a tale that is found from England to China; and in "Theodosius of Rome" we have one of the early forms of the tale of King Lear, which is of British origin.

TALES FROM SCANDINAVIA

In the days when the tales in the *Gesta Romanorum* were being penned, the old Vikings of Iceland, giving over war for the peaceful occupation of sheep-farmers, were producing round the hearth on dark winter evenings some of the most glorious things in the literature of the world. Their finest tale, "Gudrun," is too long to be called a short story, but we have many examples of the mastery which the old Norsemen won in the brief story. There is the old folk-story of "The Werewolf," which, for the sake of variety, we give in a Swedish version. Then there is the longer tale of "Frithiof the Bold," written by an Iclander in the fourteenth century, but full of brave and vivid memories of the wild age of the sea rovers. From the mainland come the ancient tales of "Glob

and Alger"—a romance of barbarism—and "The Ness King," which is equally fine.

THE "ARABIAN NIGHTS"

Then from Iceland and the Northlands we pass to the enchanted city of Bagdad in the days of the good Haroun Alraschid. The *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* is a late collection of all the popular tales of the lands of Islam. It is the *Gesta* of the mediaeval Mohammedan world, but immeasurably superior in romantic qualities and literary power to the popular collection of Christian tales. "The Fisherman and the Genie" comes from India. The tale of "The One-eyed Calender" may have been told to Haroun Alraschid; but long before his time it was known to the popular story-tellers, who still tell it on feast-days, sitting on a bench outside the café, with the townsmen gathered round smoking their long chibouks. These nameless story-tellers are probably the best men at their art that ever lived: they throw themselves with passion into their tales, and the emotions they simulate act on their imagination. Their best story is the now world-famous "Alí Baba and the Forty Thieves," which the Persians handed on to the Arabs. For drama, romance, and unexpected movement this is unequalled. Even the famous Syrian story of "Aladdin" cannot compare with it. Then, in "The Story of the Little Hunchback," we have a grimly amusing tale of the Turkestan city of Kashgar, the plot for which probably came over the passes from India.

PERSIAN STORIES

The *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* in its first form was translated from the old Persian into Arabic as early as the tenth century. Then the popular wandering story-tellers worked upon it, and it was cast into its modern shape about four hundred years ago. The Persians still possess many stories that deserve to be included in the great work. Some of them are tales of common life, like the story of "The Pilgrim and the Robbers," in which is related an ordinary adventure of desert travel such as occurs week after week in modern Persia. The next story, "The Kazi of Emessa," probably goes back many hundreds of years. Besides the light it casts on Persian life and manners, it is remarkable for containing the central idea of "The Merchant of Venice" and also the first sketch of Shylock. Very likely the story is the original source of the tale, from which Shakespeare drew his plot. "The Envious Vizier" is another Oriental narrative which has spread over Asia and Europe, and the German poet, Schiller, has versified one of the European

versions. Most of these Persian tales are calculated to amuse a reader as much by their style as by their matter. They are full of extravagant and fanciful rhetorical flourishes, and they afford a first-hand example of the wildly florid diction of the Persian man of letters.

TALES FROM BOCCACCIO

The next and most important stage in the evolution of the art of the short story brings us back to Europe in the fourteenth century, when the first of the modern story-tellers, Giovanni Boccaccio of Florence, took some of the best things in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and some new tales of his own invention or his own arrangement, and composed his great classic, the *Decameron*. This work is the crown of mediaeval prose fiction. It looks back to the masters of Greek prose, in the vivid and terrible description of the Black Death in Florence, with which the book opens, and which is modelled on Thucydides' picture of Athens under the plague. It resumes and expands the craft of the best tellers of tales in the Middle Ages. It looks forward to the modern methods of art of brief narrative, inspiring Chaucer, Dryden, and later narrative poets with both ideas and form.

Boccaccio has a wonderful range of vision and execution. He is the Shakespeare of the short story. He is coarse and delicate, humorous and tragic, superficial and profound by turns. All human life is his province. The fable of "The Three Rings" is worthy of Lucian at his best: it is an old anecdote to which he gives a keener edge and a direct significance. It announces the Renaissance. Then, in his delightful comedy of "Gillette of Narbonne" he has supplied Shakespeare with the plot of "All's Well that ends Well"; and in the strange tragedy of "Tancred of Salerno" he has done one of those rare high things in prose from which great painters as well as great poets have drawn inspiration. The wild love-story of "Cimon and Iphigenia" is almost as fine, and it is truer to fact than is the softened version that Dryden produced. The haunted pine-forest in the next story of "Anastasio" was visited by Byron out of love for the varied art of Boccaccio, who is as masterly in supernatural romance as he is in witty gallantries and tragic horrors.

With a happy sense of contrast he follows this eerie tale of the faithful lover with an ordinary story about the same subject. In "Federigo and the Falcon" he relies entirely upon his knowledge of the human heart, when a strong passion is working in it without anything to oppose it. This natural simple tale of gallantry and generosity is the most winning thing in the *Decameron*. But in popularity it is quite obscured

by the story of the patient wife, "Griselda," which is the most famous of all Boccaccio's tales. As a piece of art it is inferior to some of his other stories, but its subject-matter—the fidelity of the married women of Europe—transformed it into a sort of evangel, and the European women prized it passionately, because it defended them against the slanders that, spreading from the Orient, had lowered them to the level of the prisoners of the zenana and harem. "Griselda," like the "Nut-Brown Maid" of our old English ballad, was a splendid weapon for the rehabilitation of the character of the mothers of Christendom.

SACCHETTI AND SER GIOVANNI

Franco Sacchetti, a follower of Boccaccio and a native of Florence, where he was born in 1330, is only one of the little masters of the *conte*. He described the daily life of his native city on its lighter side, and, as his "Blind Beggar of Orvieto" shows, he aimed only at provoking a ripple of amusement at the frailty and cunning of poor human nature. Ser Giovanni, the Florentine, who lived about the same time, is a writer of a higher stamp. He was an old notary with a charming strain of ironic humour; and for grace and sweetness of style he is scarcely inferior to Boccaccio. His first story, "Galgano and Minoccia," is one of the most beautiful triumphs of honour ever recorded. And his vivacious narrative of "Bucciolo and his Tutor" was the foundation of some of the scenes in Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor."

E. W.

KING KHAḤRI EGYPTIAN, 4800 B.C.

THE TALE OF KHAḤRI

I WILL tell your Majesty a wonderful thing that happened in the time of your father, King Nebka the Just, when he went to the temple of Ptah, the master of Memphis.

Now, one day His Majesty went into the temple of Ptah and with his train visited the house of his scribe and chief magician, Ubauaner. And the wife of Ubauaner saw a vassal standing behind the King, and as soon as she saw him, her heart longed after him, and she sent her maid to him with a gift of beautiful garments. And the maid brought the man back with her. Now the chief magician had a lodge on his lake, and after several days had passed, the vassal said to the wife of Ubauaner :

"There is a lodge on the lake. If it pleases thee, we will stay there together a little while."

Then the wife of the magician said to the steward who had charge of the lake :

"Let the lodge on the lake be prepared for me."

He did as she said, and she stayed there drinking with the vassal till the sun set. And when evening fell, the man went down into the lake to bathe, and the maid told the steward what had passed between her mistress and the vassal. And when daylight broke over the land and the second day had passed, the steward sought out the chief magician and told him what had happened in the lodge.

"Bring me my casket of ebony inlaid with vermilion containing my book of magic," said the magician to his steward.

And when Ubauaner obtained it, he fashioned a crocodile of wax, seven inches long, and chanted over it something from his book of magic.

"When that vassal goes down to bathe in my lake," he chanted, "then drag him into the depths of the water !"

He gave the crocodile to the steward and said to him : "When the vassal goes down to the lake to bathe, as he does every day, throw this crocodile of wax into the water behind him !"

The steward then departed, taking the waxen crocodile with him.

And the wife of Ubauaner said to the steward :

" Let the lodge on the lake be prepared for me ; for I wish to rest in it."

So the lodge was filled with all good things, and the woman came and made merry there with the vassal. When evening fell, the vassal went, as was his custom every day, to bathe in the lake, and the steward threw the crocodile of wax into the water after him. And the crocodile changed into a crocodile seven ells in length, and seized the vassal and carried him under the water.

Now the chief magician, Ubauaner, stayed seven days with Nebka the Just, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, while the vassal remained under the water without breathing. When the seven days were over, and Nebka the Just came to the temple, the chief magician came before him and said :

" Would it please your Majesty to come and see the marvel that has happened in regard to one of your vassals ? "

So His Majesty went with Ubauaner to the lake, and Ubauaner called to the crocodile :

" Bring the man out of the water ! "

And the crocodile came from the lake with the vassal, and the magician cried, " Stop ! " And he laid a spell on the creature, and made it halt before the King.

" Oh, how terrible this crocodile is ! " said Nebka the Just.

But his chief magician stooped and seized the monster, and it became in his hands only a little thing of wax. Ubauaner then told the King what the vassal had done in his house to his wife.

" Take what belongs to thee ! " said the King to the crocodile.

And the crocodile plunged into the depths of the lake with its prey, and no man has ever known what became of him.

Then Nebka the Just, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, ordered that the wife of Ubauaner be brought forth to the north side of the palace ; and there she was burnt and her ashes were cast into the river.

ZIHARPTO
EGYPTIAN, 1300 B.C.

THE TALE OF AHURI

I AM Ahuri, daughter of the King Mineb-Ptah. The man thou seest by my side is my brother, Nenoferke-Ptah. We were born of the same father and the same mother, and our parents had no other children but us. When the time came for me to marry, I was led before the King at the hour when he was being entertained by his harem. I was greatly adorned, and I was beautiful.

"Look! Ahuri, our daughter, is grown into a woman!" said the King. "It is time to marry her. To whom shall we marry her, Ahuri, our daughter?"

Now I deeply loved my brother, and I desired no other husband but him. I told my mother this, and she sought out the King, and said to him:

"Ahuri, our daughter, loves her brother. Let us marry them together, according to the custom!"

But when the King heard all the words that my mother said, he replied:

"You have only two children, and yet you wish them to marry each other! Would it not be better to wed Ahuri to the son of a commander of our foot-soldiers, and marry Nenoferke-Ptah to the daughter of another commander of the army?"

"So you wish to start quarrelling with me!" cried the Queen. "Even though I have no other children but these two, is it not the law that brother and sister should marry?"

"I shall wed the boy to the daughter of one of my generals," said the King. "That will turn more to the benefit of our line!"

When it was time for the women to appear before Pharaoh, they came and sought for me, and led me to the festival. But I was deeply troubled, and I could not bear myself joyfully as I had done the evening before. Pharaoh said to me:

"Was it not thou who sent to me that foolish message: 'Let me marry my brother?'"

"Very well," I said, "marry me to the son of one commander of foot-soldiers, and marry Nenoferke-Ptah to the daughter of another

commander of foot-soldiers, and may it turn out well for our family!"

I laughed and Pharaoh laughed; and he said to the chief of the royal house:

"Let Ahuri be led this very night to her brother's palace, and let her take with her all kinds of splendid gifts!"

So I was led as bride to the palace of Nenoferke-Ptah, and Pharaoh commanded his people to bring me a great dowry in gold and silver, and all the folk of the royal house came to me with gifts. Then Nenoferke spent the day feasting with me, and received all the folk of the royal house, and he remained with me that night. And soon I was with child, and the news was carried to Pharaoh and his heart was gladdened by it; and he took all sorts of precious objects from his royal treasures and sent me very beautiful presents in gold and silver and cloths of fine linen. And when the time came for me to take to my bed, I gave birth to this little child that thou seest before me. He was given the name of Maihet, and he was entered on the registers of the double house of life.

And many days after this, Nenoferke-Ptah seemed to have nothing on earth to do but wander amid the graves of Memphis, reading the writings on the tombs of the Pharaohs and on the grave-stones of the scribes of the double house of life. For he took an extreme interest in these writings. And afterwards there was a procession in honour of the god Ptah, and Nenoferke-Ptah went into the temple to pray. But while he was walking behind the procession, deciphering the writings on the chapels of the gods, an old man saw him and laughed.

"Why are you laughing at me?" said Nenoferke-Ptah.

"I am not laughing at you," said the priest, "but how can I help smiling when you come here to read writings without any power? If truly you desire to read a writing, come to me, and I will send you to a place where there is that book that Thoth wrote himself with his own divine hand when he came down here with the other gods. There are two formulas written in it. On reciting the first, you will enchant the heavens and the earth, the land of night, the mountains and the waters. You will understand what the birds of the air and the reptiles say, and you will see the fishes of the abyss, for a divine force will rest on the water above them. If you read the second formula, then, though you are in your grave, you will recover the form that you had on earth. Yes! you will even see again the sun rise over heaven with his divine train, and the moon in the form she puts on when she really appears!"

"By the life of the King!" said Nenoferke-Ptah to the priest, "tell me all that you wish for, and I will give it to you; if you lead me to the spot where this book is."

"Give me, then, a hundred pieces of silver for my burial, and

have two coffins made for me as for a rich priest ! ”

Nenofkerke-Ptah ordered a page to give the priest a hundred pieces of silver, and had the two coffins made for the old man.

“ The book in question,” said the priest then, “ is in the middle of the Nile at Coptos, in an iron chest. In the iron chest is a bronze box. In the bronze box is a box of cinnamon wood. In the box of cinnamon wood is a box of ivory and ebony. In the box of ivory and ebony is a silver box ; in the silver box is a golden box, and in this is the book. There is a vast mass of serpents, scorpions, and all kinds of reptiles round the chest containing the book, and an immortal snake is twined about it.”

So astounded was Nenofkerke-Ptah at hearing these words that he did not know in what part of the world he was. He left the temple and told me all that had happened.

“ I shall go to Coptos,” he said, “ and bring back the book. Then I shall not leave the northern land again.”

But I rose against the priest.

“ Pray Amon to guard thee,” I said, “ for what thou hast said to Nenofkerke-Ptah. For thou hast led me into this feud ; thou hast brought this war upon me ; and I find the spirit of the land of Thebes an enemy of my happiness ! ”

I raised my hand against my brother so that he should not go to Coptos ; but he would not listen to me, but went before Pharaoh and related all that the priest had said.

“ What is the wish of your heart ? ” said Pharaoh.

“ To be given the royal ship, all equipped. I will take Ahuri, my sister, and Maihet, her baby, to the south with me : I will bring back this book, and then I will never leave this land.”

He was given the ship, well equipped, and we went on it, and made the voyage to Coptos.

And the chief priest and the priests of Isis of Coptos came down before us : and the men went without delay and stood in front of my brother, and their women came down and stood before me. We landed and went to the temple of Isis and of Harpocrates, and Nenofkerke-Ptah had a bull, a goose, and wine brought, and presented an offering and a libation before Isis and Harpocrates. Then we were led into a house that was very beautiful and full of all sorts of good things. My brother spent four days of entertainment with the priests, while their wives held festival with me.

The morning after, Nenofkerke-Ptah had a large quantity of pure wax brought before him. With it he fashioned a boat, filled with rowers and sailors, and over them he chanted a spell and gave them life and breath. He filled the royal ship with sand, and taking leave of me, he went on board. And I fixed my biding-place on the water of Coptos, saying, “ I will know what happens to him ! ”



"Rowers," he said, "row for me to the spot where the book is!"

And they rowed for him, night and day; and in three days he reached the spot, and threw out the sand and made an empty place in the river. He found a vast mass of serpents, scorpions, and all kind of reptiles round a chest of iron, and he saw a snake coiled around the chest. Chanting a spell, he took the life out of the serpents, scorpions, and reptiles. Then he attacked the great snake and killed it. It came to life again in a new form; and again he attacked it and killed it. Once more the snake came to life; but he cut it into two halves and placed sand in between each portion, and the snake died, and did not resume its former shape.

Nenofkerke-Ptah then went to the spot where the chest was, and saw it was made of iron. Opening it, he found a box of bronze. Opening this, he found a box of cinnamon wood. Opening this, he found a box of ivory and ebony. Opening this, he found a box of silver, and opening this, he found a casket of gold with a book within it.

He drew the book from the golden casket, and recited the formula that was written in it. He enchanted the heavens and the earth, the land of night, the mountains and the waters. He understood all that was said by the birds of the air, the fish of the water, and the beasts of the heights. He recited the other formula of the writing, and he saw the sun rise into heaven with his train of gods, and the ascending moon, and the stars in their form. And he saw the fishes of the abyss, for a divine power rested on the water above them; and chanting a spell on the water he made it resume its early form.

Then embarking once more, he said to the rowers, "Row for me to the place where Ahuri is!"

They rowed for him, night and day; and in three days he came to the spot at which I was, and found me sitting by the water of Coptos. I did not drink: I did not eat: I never stirred: I was like a person who had come to the house of death.

"By the life of the King!" I said to Nenofkerke-Ptah, "let me see this book, for which we have taken all these pains!"

He put the book in my hand. I read a formula of the writing in it, and I enchanted the heavens and the earth, the land of night, the mountains and the waters. I understood all that was said by the birds of the air, the fishes of the abyss, and the four-footed beasts. I recited another formula of the writing, and I saw the sun appear in the sky with his train of gods, and the risen moon, and all the stars of heaven in their form. I saw the fishes of the water; for there was a divine power that rested on the water above them.

As I could not write very much, in comparison with my brother, who was an accomplished scribe and a very learned man, he called

for a piece of virgin papyrus, and wrote on it all the words there were in the book; and he soaked it in beer and let it all dissolve in a drink. Then he drank it up, and thus knew everything there was in the writing.

The same day we returned to Coptos, and held a feast before Isis and Harpocrates. Then we returned to the ship, and sailed away to the north. But Thoth knew what had happened to his book, and he hastened to plead before the sun-god, Ra.

"My law and my canon are now with Nenoferke-Ptah, son of King Mineb-Ptah!" he said. "He has penetrated into my lodge and pillaged it, and taken my casket with my book of incantations, and killed my watchman that guarded the casket."

"He is thine, he and all that is his—all!" said the great god, making a divine power come down from the heavens, and saying, "Let not Nenoferke-Ptah arrive in safety at Memphis, nor any that is with him!"

And at that very moment my child Maihet crawled from under the awning of the royal ship and fell into the river, fulfilling the good pleasure of Ra. All those on deck cried out. My brother came out of the cabin and recited a spell on the baby and made him arise; for there was a divine power resting on the water above him. Again he said a spell over the little child, and made him relate all that had happened to him, and the accusation that Thoth had laid before Ra.

We returned to Coptos with our dead son, and took him to the embalming-house, and placed people by him for the funeral ceremonies; we had him embalmed as became a royal prince, and we laid him in his coffin in the cemetery of Coptos.

"Let us go!" said my brother. "Let us not delay to return before the King hears what has befallen us, and his heart becomes troubled."

We returned to the ship and sailed away and came to the place where our little child Maihet had fallen in the river. I came forth from under the awning of the royal ship, and fell into the water, and fulfilled the good pleasure of Ra. And all who were on deck gave a loud cry.

Nenoferke-Ptah was told, and he came from under the awning, and recited a spell over me; and a divine force rested upon the water, and made me rise up. Drawing me out of the river, he said another spell over me, and made me relate all that happened and the accusation that Thoth had laid before Ra.

My brother then returned to Coptos with me, and led me to the house of the dead, and put people around me for the funeral services, and had me embalmed as became my high greatness, and then laid me in the tomb where my little child Maihet already reposed. Then sailing away, he came to the place where we had fallen in the river.

There he talked to his own heart.

"Would it not be better," he said, "to go to Coptos and stay with them? For if I return to Memphis, and Pharaoh questions me about his children, what shall I say to him? Can I tell him, 'I took your children with me towards the land of Thebes, and I killed them and I live, and I return to Memphis still living'?"

He called for a piece of fine royal linen which belonged to him, and he made a magic band out of it. In this band he tied the book, and put it on his breast, and there fixed it firmly. Then he came from under the awning of the royal ship, and fell into the water, and fulfilled the good pleasure of Ra.

"Oh, what a great misfortune!" cried the sailors. "What a lamentable misfortune! He is gone, the excellent scribe, the wise man who had no equal!"

The ship of Pharaoh sailed on, before anybody knew where Nenoferke-Ptah lay. It arrived at Memphis, and Pharaoh was told, and he came down before the ship. He was in a mantle of mourning; and all the soldiers of Memphis were in mantles of mourning, and the great priest of Ptah, and the priests, and all the courtiers. And lo! they saw Nenoferke-Ptah, caught against the helm oars of the royal ship, by reason of his excellent knowledge of magic. When he was raised from the water, the book was seen on his breast.

"Take that book away from his breast!" said Pharaoh.

"Oh, our great master—may thy life be as long as Ra's!—he was an excellent scribe, a man of much wisdom was Nenoferke-Ptah," cried the courtiers and the priests of Ptah, and the high priest.

And, for fear, the King did not touch the book of Thoth. He placed his son for sixteen days in the embalming-house: he clad him in linen for thirty-five days, and shrouded him for seventy days; and then had him laid in his tomb amid the houses of rest. Such were the misfortunes that befell us by reason of the book of Thoth.

THE BUDDHA INDIAN, *circa* 560 B.C.

THE MONKEY AND THE QUEEN'S JEWELS

ONCE on a time, when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the future Buddha, having perfected his education, became one of the King's Ministers. One day the King, with a large following, went into his pleasure, and, after walking about the woods, felt a desire to disport himself in the water. So he went down into the royal tank and sent for his harem. The women of the harem, removing the jewels from their heads and necks and so forth, laid them aside with their upper garments in boxes under the charge of female slaves, and then went down into the water. Now, as the Queen was taking off her jewels and ornaments, and laying them with her upper robe on a box, she was watched by a female monkey, which was hidden in the branches of a tree hard by. Conceiving a longing to wear the Queen's pearl necklace, this monkey watched for the slave in charge to be off her guard. At first the girl kept looking all about her in order to keep the jewels safe ; but as time wore on she began to nod. As soon as the monkey saw this, quick as the wind she jumped down, and quick as the wind she was up the tree again, with the pearls round her own neck. Then, for fear the other monkeys should see it, she hid the string of pearls in a hole in the tree, and sat on guard over her spoils as demurely as though nothing had happened. By and by the slave awoke, and, terrified at finding the jewels gone, saw nothing else to do but to scream out, " A man has run off with the Queen's pearl necklace."

Up ran the guards from every side, and, hearing this story, told it to the King.

" Catch the thief," said His Majesty ; and away went the guards, searching high and low for the thief in the pleasure.

Hearing the din, a poor superstitious rustic took to his heels in alarm.

" There he goes," cried the guards, catching sight of the runaway ; and they followed him up till they caught him, and with blows

THE BUDDHA

demanded what he meant by stealing such precious jewels.

Thought he, "If I deny the charge, I shall die with the beating I shall get from these ruffians. I'd better say I took it." So he confessed to the theft and was hauled off a prisoner to the King.

"Did you take those precious jewels?" asked the King.

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Where are they now?"

"Please, your Majesty, I'm a poor man; I've never in my life owned anything, even a bed or a chair, of any value,—much less a jewel. It was the Treasurer who made me take that valuable necklace; and I took it and gave it to him. He knows all about it."

Then the King sent for the Treasurer, and asked whether the rustic had passed the necklace on to him.

"Yes, sire," was the answer.

"Where is it, then?"

"I gave it to your Majesty's Chaplain."

Then the Chaplain was sent for, and interrogated in the same way. And he said he had given it to the Chief Musician, who in his turn said he had given it to a courtesan as a present. But she, being brought before the King, utterly denied ever having received it.

Whilst the five were thus being questioned, the sun set.

"It's too late now," said the King; "we will look into this to-morrow." So he handed the five over to his Ministers and went back into the city.

Hereupon the future Buddha, or Bodhisatta, fell a-thinking. "These jewels," thought he, "were lost inside the grounds, whilst the rustic was outside. There was a strong guard at the gates, and it was impossible for any one inside to get away with the necklace. I do not see how any one, whether inside or out, could have managed to secure it. The truth is, this poor wretched fellow must have said he gave it to the Treasurer merely in order to save his own skin; and the Treasurer must have said he gave it to the Chaplain in the hope that he would get off if he could mix the Chaplain up in the matter. Further, the Chaplain must have said he gave it to the Chief Musician because he thought the latter would make the time pass merrily in prison; whilst the Chief Musician's object in implicating the courtesan was simply to solace himself with her company during imprisonment. Not one of the whole five has anything to do with the theft. On the other hand, the grounds swarm with monkeys, and the necklace must have got into the hands of one of the female monkeys."

When he had arrived at this conclusion, the Bodhisatta went to the King with the request that the suspects might be handed over to him, and that he might be allowed to examine personally into the matter.

"By all means, my wise friend," said the King, "examine into it."

Then the Bodhisatta sent for his servants and told them where to lodge the five prisoners, saying, "Keep strict watch over them; listen to everything they say, and report it all to me." And his servants did as he bade them.

As the prisoners sat together, the Treasurer said to the rustic, "Tell me, you wretch, where you and I ever met before this day; tell me when you gave me that necklace."

"Worshipful sir," said the other, "it has never been mine to own aught so valuable even as a stool or bedstead that wasn't rickety. I thought that with your help I should get out of this trouble, and that's why I said what I did. Be not angry with me, my lord."

Said the Chaplain in his turn to the Treasurer, "How then came you to pass on to me what this fellow had never given to you?"

"I only said so because I thought that if you and I, both high officers of state, stand together, we can soon put the matter right."

"Brahmin," now said the Chief Musician to the Chaplain, "when, pray, did you give the jewels to me?"

"I only said I did," answered the Chaplain, "because I thought you would help to make the time pass more agreeably."

Lastly the courtesan said, "Oh, you wretch of a musician, you know you never visited me, nor I you. So when could you have given me the necklace, as you say?"

"Why be angry, my dear?" said the Musician; "we five have got to keep house together for a bit; so let us put a cheerful face on it and be happy together."

This conversation being reported to the Bodhisatta by his agents, he felt convinced the five were all innocent of the robbery, and that a female monkey had taken the necklace. "And I must find a means to make her drop it," said he to himself. So he had a number of bead necklaces made. Next he had a number of monkeys caught and turned loose again, with strings of beads on their necks, wrists, and ankles. Meantime, the guilty monkey kept sitting in the trees watching her treasure. Then the Bodhisatta ordered a number of men carefully to observe every monkey in the grounds, till they saw one wearing the missing pearl necklace, and then frighten her into dropping it.

Tricked out in their new splendour, the other monkeys strutted about till they came to the real thief, before whom they flaunted their finery. Jealousy overcoming her prudence, she exclaimed, "They're only beads!" and put on her own necklace of real pearls. This was at once seen by the watchers, who promptly made her drop the necklace, which they picked up and brought to the Bodhisatta. He took it to the King, saying, "Here, sire, is the necklace. The

five prisoners are innocent ; it was a female moi key in the pleasure that took it."

"How came you to find that out ?" asked the King ; "and how did you manage to get possession of it again ?"

Then the Bodhisatta told the whole story, and the King thanked the Bodhisatta, saying, "You are the right man in the right place." And he uttered this stanza in praise of the Bodhisatta :

"For war men crave the hero's might,
For counsel sage sobriety,
Boon comrades for their jollity,
But judgment when in parlous plight."

Over and above these words of praise and gratitude, the King showered treasures upon the Bodhisatta like a storm-cloud pouring rain from the heavens. After following the Bodhisatta's counsels through a long life spent in charity and good works, the King passed away to fare thereafter according to his deserts.

THE BUDDHA

THE TALE OF THE PRINCESS SAMBULA

ONCE upon a time King Brahmadatta had a son named Sotthisena, and when he had come of age the King set him up as viceroy. His chief consort, Sambula by name, was extremely beautiful, and gifted with so radiant a form that she appeared like a lamp-flame shining in a sheltered spot. By and by leprosy showed itself in Sotthisena, and the physicians failed to cure it. When the sore discharged he became so loathsome that in his depression he cried :

“ What is my kingdom to me ? I shall perish without a friend in the wilderness.”

And, bidding them tell the King, he left his harem and departed. Sambula, though he made many attempts to stop her, refused to return, saying, “ I will watch over you, my lord, in the forest,” went forth from the city with him.

On entering the forest, he built a hut of leaves and took up his abode in a shady and well-watered spot, where wild fruit abounded. How then did the royal lady watch over him ? Why, she rose up early in the morning, swept out his hermitage, set some water for him to drink, furnished him with a tooth-stick and water to wash his mouth, and when his mouth was cleansed she ground various simples and anointed his sores, and gave him luscious fruits to eat ; when he had rinsed his mouth and washed his hands, she saluted him and said, “ Be earnest in well-doing, my lord.”

Then taking a basket, a spade, and a hook, she went into the forest to gather wild fruit, and she brought and set it on one side, and fetching water in a jar she with various powders and clay washed Sotthisena and again offered him wild fruit. And when he had finished his meal, she brought him scented water and herself partook of the fruit. Then she arranged a board with a coverlet, and as he lay down on it she bathed his feet, and after dressing and cleaning his head and back and feet, she came and lay down by the side of the bed. In this way did she watch over her lord.

One day, as she was bringing fruit from the forest, she espied a mountain cave, and putting down the basket from her head, she

stood on the edge of the cave, and stepping down to bathe, she rubbed her body all over with yellow dye and took a bath. After washing herself she climbed up again and put on her bark garment and stood on the edge of the pool. And the whole forest was lighted up with the radiance that was shed from her person.

At that moment a goblin, going forth to find his prey, caught sight of her, and falling in love with her, he repeated a couple of stanzas :

" Tied to the spot and trembling as in fear,
Who in this rocky cave is standing here ?
Tell us, I pray, O slender-waisted dame,
Who may thy kinsmen be, and what thy name.

" Who art thou, lady, ever fair and bright,
And what thy birth that thou canst flood with light
This grove, fit home of every beast of prey ?
An ogre, I to thee due homage pay."

On hearing what he said, she replied in three stanzas :

" Prince Sotthisena, know full well, is heir to Kāsi throne,
And I, this Prince's wedded wife, as Sambula am known.

" Videha's royal son is sick and in the forest lies ;
Alone I tend him, mad with pain, or else he surely dies.

" This savoury bit of venison I picked up in the wood,
And bear it to my lord to-day, now faint for want of food."

This was followed by stanzas spoken alternately by the goblin and the lady :

" What good is this sick lord of thine, O Sambula, to thee ?
No wife, but nurse is what he craves. I will thy husband be."

" With sorrow worn, a wretch forlorn, no beauty can I claim,
If thou art fain a bride to gain, go woo some fairer dame."

" Four hundred wives have I to grace my home on yonder hill ;
O lady, deign o'er them to reign, and each fond wish fulfil.
Fair maid so bright with golden light, whate'er is dear to thee
Is mine to give, to come and live a life of joy with me.
But if denied to me as bride, thou art my lawful prey,
And wilt be good to serve as food to break my fast to-day."

(That ogre grim with his seven tufts inspiring dread alarm,
Found helpless Sambula astray and seized her by the arm.
Thus held by him, that ogre grim, her lustful, cruel foe,
She still deplored her absent lord, nor e'er forgot his woe.)

"No grief to me that I should be this hateful ogre's prey,
But that the love of my dear lord from me should fall away.
No gods are here, but absent far they flee,
Nor any guardians of the world I see,
To check the course of outrage and suppress
All acts of unrestrained licentiousness."

Then was the abode of Sakka shaken by the efficacy of her virtue, and his throne of yellow marble showed signs of heat. Sakka, on reflection, discovered the cause, and, taking his thunderbolt, he came with all speed, and, standing above the goblin, spoke another stanza:

"'Mongst women folk the chief in fame,
She's wise and perfect, bright as flame,
Shouldst thou eat her, thy skull be riven,
O goblin, into fragments seven.
So harm her not; let her go free,
For a devoted wife is she."

On hearing this the goblin let Sambula go. Sakka thought, "This goblin will be guilty of the same thing again," and so he bound him with celestial chains and let him loose on the third mountain from thence, that he might not return; and after earnestly exhorting the royal lady, he departed to his own abode. And the Princess, after sunset, by the light of the moon reached the hermitage.

There, to explain the matter, she recited the following eight stanzas:

"Escape from ogre, to her hut she fled,
As bird returning finds its fledglings dead,
Or cow, robbed of her calf, laments an empty shed.

"Thus Sambula, of royal fame, made moan,
Wild-eyed and helpless, in the wood, alone.

"Hail, priests and Brahmins, righteous sages too,
Deserted, I for refuge fly to you.

"All hail, ye lions and ye tigers fell,
And other beasts that in the woodland dwell.

"All hail, ye grasses, herbs and plants that creep,
All hail, ye forests green and mountains steep.

"All hail to Night, bedecked with stars on high,
Dark as blue lotus of the deepest dye.

"All hail to Ganges: mother of rivers she,
Known amongst men as famed Bhagirathi.

"Hail, Himavat, of all the mountains king,
Huge rocky pile, o'ertopping everything."

Regarding her, as she uttered this lamentation, Sotthisena thought, "She is overdoing her lamentation : I do not quite know what it all means. If she were acting thus for love of me, her heart would be broken. I will put her to the test."

And he went and sat at the door of his hut.

She, still lamenting, came to the door, and, making a low obeisance, said, "Where has my lord been?"

"Lady," he said, "on other days you have never come at this hour ; to-day you are very late," and in the form of a question he spoke this stanza :

"Illustrious lady, why so late to-day?
What favoured lover led to this delay?"

Then she made answer, "My lord, I was returning with my fruit when I beheld a goblin, and he fell in love with me, and seizing me by the hand, he cried, 'Unless you obey my words, I will eat you alive. And at that moment, sorrowing for you only, I uttered this lament'" and she repeated this stanza :

"Seized by my foe, I, full of woe, these words to him did say,
'No grief to me that I should be a hateful ogre's prey,
But that the love of my dear lord from me should fall away!'"

Then she told him the rest of the story, saying :

"So when I was seized by this goblin, and was unable to make him let me go, I acted so as to excite the attention of the god. Then Sakka came, thunderbolt in hand, and, standing in the air, he threatened the goblin and made him release me. And he bound him with magic chains and deposited him on the third mountain range from here, and so departed. Thus was I saved by means of Sakka."

Sotthisena, on hearing this, replied :

"Well, lady, it may be so. With womenkind it is hard to discover the truth. In the Himalaya region dwell many foresters, ascetics, and magicians. Who shall believe you?" And so saying, he repeated a stanza :

"You jades are ever by far too clever,
Truth among such is a great rarity,
Ways of the sex are enough to perplex,
E'en as the course of a fish in the sea."

On hearing his words, she said :

"My lord, though you do not believe me, by virtue of the truth I speak I will heal you." So, filling a pot of water and performing an

Act of Truth, she poured the water on his head and spoke this stanza :

" May Truth for aye my shelter be,
As I love no man more than thee,
And by this Act of Truth, I pray,
May thy disease be healed to-day."

When she had thus performed an Act of Truth, no sooner was the water sprinkled over Sotthisena than the leprosy straightway left him, as it were copper rust washed in some acid. After staying a few days there, they departed from the forest, and, coming to Benares, entered the park.

The King, being apprised of their arrival, went to the park, and there and then bade the royal umbrella to be raised over Sotthisena, and ordered that Sambula, by sprinkling, should be raised to the position of chief Queen. Then conducting them into the city, he himself adopted the ascetic life and took up his abode in the park, but he still constantly took his meals in the palace.

And Sotthisena merely conferred on Sambula the rank of chief consort, but no honour was paid her, and he ignored her very existence and took his pleasure with other women.

Sambula, through jealousy of her rivals, grew thin and pale of countenance and her veins stood out upon her body. One day when her father-in-law, the ascetic, came to have a meal, to get rid of her grief she came to him when he had finished eating, and saluting him, sat down on one side.

On seeing her in this languid condition, he repeated a stanza :

" Seven hundred elephants by night and day
Are guarding thee, all ready for the fray,
Hundreds of archers shielding thee from harm ;
Whence come the foes to fill thee with alarm ? "

On hearing his words she said, " Your son, my lord, is no longer the same to me," and she repeated five stanzas :

" Fair as a lotus are the maids he loves,
Their swan-like voice his deepest passion moves,
And as he listens to their measured strain,
In his affections I no longer reign.

" In human shape but like to nymphs divine,
Adorned with ornaments of gold they shine,
Of perfect form the noble maidens lie
In graceful pose, to charm the royal eye.

" If I once more might wander in the wood,
To glean a portion for his daily food,
Once more I should a husband's love regain,
And quit the court in forest realms to reign.

• "A woman may in softest robes be drest,
And be with food in rich abundance blest,
Fair though she be, yet if an unloved wife,
Best fix a rope and put an end to life."

• "Yea, the poor wretch on bed of straw that lies,
If she find favour in her husband's eyes,
Enjoys a happiness unknown to one,
Rich in all else, but poor in love alone."

When she had thus explained to the ascetic the cause of her thus pining away, he summoned the King and said :

"Dear Sotthisena, when you were crushed by the disease of leprosy and hid yourself in the forest, she went with you and ministered to your wants, and by the power of truth healed your sickness, and now after she has been the means of your being established on the throne, you do not even know the place of her sitting and uprising ; this is very wrong of you. An act of treachery to a friend like this is a sin," and reproving his son, he repeated this stanza :

"A loving wife is ever hard to find,
As is a man that to his wife is kind :
Thy wife was virtuous and loving too ;
Do thou, O King, to Sambula be true."

After he had thus reproved his son, he got up and went away. The King, when his father was gone, called for Sambula and said, "My dear, forgive the wrong I have done you this long time. Henceforth I confer on you all power," and he repeated the final stanza :

"Shouldst thou, with wealth in great abundance blest,
Still pine away, by jealousy oppress,
I and these maidens, creatures of thy hand,
Will be obedient to thy command."

Thenceforth the pair lived happily together, and after a life of charity and good works they departed to fare according to their deeds. The ascetic, after entering upon ecstatic meditation, passed to the heaven of Brahma.

THE BUDDHA

THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN

IN the days when Brahmadata was King of Benares, the future Buddha was born the son of a peasant ; and when he grew up he gained his living by tilling the ground.

And at that time a hawker used to go from village to village, selling goods that he carried on an ass. And whenever he was near a village, he took his pack from the back of his ass, and dressed the beast in a lion's skin, and turned it loose to feed in the fields of rice and barley. And when the watchmen in the fields saw the ass amid the grain, they dared not drive it away, thinking it was a lion.

One day the hawker was stopping by a certain village, and while his own breakfast was cooking, he dressed the ass in the lion's skin and turned it loose in a barley field. The watchmen did not dare to approach the animal, but ran home, crying out the news. Then all the villagers came forth with weapons in their hands, and blowing chanks and beating drums, they went as near as they dared to the barley field, and shouted. And being frightened by the noise the ass roared back—but it was the bray of a donkey !

And when the Buddha knew what sort of animal it was he made the first verse :

“ This is not a lion roaring,
Nor a tiger nor a panther—
Only a poor wretched donkey,
Braying in a lion's skin ! ”

And when the villagers saw that the creature was only an ass, they beat it till they broke its bones, and carrying off the lion's skin, they returned home. Then the hawker came from his hiding-place, and seeing into what a plight the ass had fallen, he made the second verse :

“ All your life, you foolish donkey,
Could you feed on rice and barley,
Dressed up as a mighty lion—
But your braying broke the spell ! ”

And while he was still speaking, the donkey died on the spot.

THE BUDDHA

THE TALKATIVE TORTOISE.

IN the days when Brahmadata was King of Benares, the future Buddha was born the son of a minister, and when he grew to manhood he became the King's counsellor.

Now the King was very talkative : while he was speaking, no one else could put in a word. And the Buddha wished to cure this talkativeness and was always casting about for some means of doing so.

At that time a tortoise was living in a lake in the Himalaya Mountains, and two young wild ducks, who came to feed there, made friends with him. And one day, when they were talking together in friendly fashion, the ducks said to the tortoise :

" Friend tortoise ! we live at the Cave of Gold on Beautiful Mountain in the Himalaya country. It is a delightful place ! Will you come there with us ? "

" But how can I get there ? "

" We can take you, if only you keep quiet and say not a word to anybody. Can you hold your tongue ? "

" Yes, of course I can. Take me with you. "

" That is well, " said the ducks.

And making the tortoise grip hard on a stick with his teeth, they took the two ends in their beaks and flew high up in the air.

And some villagers saw the strange sight, and shouted :

" Look at those two ducks carrying a tortoise along on a stick ! "

And the angry tortoise opened his mouth to say :

" If my friends choose to carry me, what is that to do with you, you miserable slaves ! "

So just when the swift flight of the wild ducks had brought him over the King's palace in Benares, he let go the stick he was biting, and fell into the courtyard, and there broke in two. And everybody began to cry out in wonder :

" A tortoise has fallen from the sky in the royal courtyard and broken in two. "

The King went to the spot with his courtiers, and took the Buddha with him.

“Tell me, my teacher,” he said to the Buddha, “how this tortoise has fallen from the sky?”

Then the Buddha thought to himself:

“Long have I sought for some means of admonishing the King. This tortoise must have been a friend to the wild ducks, and they must have made him bite on the stick, and have flown up into the air to carry him to the mountains. And being one of those creatures who cannot hold his tongue when someone else is talking, he must have wanted to say something, and letting go the stick he must have fallen from the sky and lost his life.”

And then turning to the King he said aloud:

“Here, in truth, O King! you see how the chatterbox, whose words have no end, comes to grief.”

And he made these verses:

“The tortoise held the stick between his teeth,
While his friends carried him along the sky:
But opening his mouth to utter speech,
By one word out of season was he killed.

“Behold him then, O excellent in strength!
And speak wise words in measure and due time!
You see how, by his talking overmuch,
The wretched tortoise talked himself to death!”

The King saw that the lesson was meant for him, and said:

“My teacher! are you speaking of us?”

And the Buddha then spoke openly:

“O great King!” he said, “any man who talks beyond measure—king or peasant—meets at last with some misfortune like to this!”

And from that time the King controlled himself and became a man of few words.

THE BUDDHA

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BUDDHA

ONE day a woman took her child to the bathing-pond of the Buddha. And after bathing the child, she went down into the water to bathe herself.

Then a ghoul saw the child and craved to eat it. And taking the form of a woman, she came to the bathing-pond.

"This is a very beautiful child!" she said to the mother. "Is it yours?"

And when she learnt that it was, she asked if she might nurse it: and the mother agreeing, she nursed it a little while and then hastened away with it.

But the mother saw her, and ran after her, and caught hold of her, crying out:

"What are you doing with my child?"

"Where did you get the child from?" said the ghoul. "It is mine!"

And quarrelling loudly, they passed the Judgment Hall of the Buddha, and hearing the noise, he enquired into the dispute and asked them if they would abide by his decision. And they agreed. He ordered a line to be drawn on the ground, and told the ghoul to seize the child by the arms and the mother to take it by the legs:

"The child shall be hers who drags it over the line," he said.

But the child cried when its tender body was pulled, and the mother saw how her young one suffered, and it grieved her till her heart nigh broke. And letting go, she stood by weeping.

Then said the Buddha to the bystanders:

"Who is it that have hearts tender to babes? Those who have borne children, or those who have not?"

"Sir!" they answered, "the hearts of mothers are tender."

"Which of these two then is the mother?" he said. "She who has the child in her arms, or she who let it go?"

"She who let it go is the mother," they said.

"Then do you think that the other is a thief?"

"Sir, we cannot tell," they said.

"Verily," he said, "this is a ghou, who took the child to eat it."

"Oh, sir!" they cried, "how did you know that?"

"Because," he said, "her red eyes did not wink, and she knew no fear and had no pity." And turning to the thief he said, "Who are you?"

"Lord! I am a ghoul," she replied.

"Why did you take away this child?" he asked.

"I desired to eat it, O my lord," she said.

"O foolish woman!" thus he rebuked her, "for the sins in your former birth have you been born an evil spirit, and yet you still sin!"

And laying a vow upon her to keep the five commandments, he let her go. But the mother of the child glorified the future Buddha, and said, "O my lord! O great physician! long life to you!" Then she went away with her babe clasped to her breast.

THE PANCHA-TANTRA

INDIAN, *circa* 300 B.C.

THE BRAHMAN OF VAIN DREAMS

CLOSE to the town of Nirmala Patna lies an *agrahra* called Darmapuri. There lived a Brahman named Soma Sarma, who for children had only one son. Yagna Sarma, as the young man was called, followed his studies with great success, and after he had become familiar with every kind of knowledge taught to persons of his condition, he sought a living in wandering about the neighbouring country, where his learning and his winning manner enabled him to find everywhere an abundance of alms which he shared with his family.

One day, having learnt that a neighbouring Brahman was giving a feast to celebrate the anniversary of the death of some kinsmen, he hastened to the house to take part in the feasting. Although the guests were many in number, they each received more than enough to satisfy them, and the feast was of the most splendid sort.

When it was over, Yagna Sarma, who had taken care to fill his belly well, turned down the road to his home. On the way, he heard that another Brahman, some distance away, was also giving that same day a feast for the same object as that at which he had already assisted. So he hastened to the second festival, and arrived at the moment when the guests were sitting in a file to be served. The master of the house saw him appear, and knowing that he had already taken part in the first feast given that day, and that he had eaten more than any other guest of the costly foods placed before him, he began to laugh. And looking with a mocking face at Yagna Sarma, he said to him :

"After having done so well at the feast given this morning, do you think you will find sufficient empty space in your belly to do honour to this feast ? "

But Yagna Sarma was not troubled by this reproach, and sitting down very quietly with the other guests, he ate with as good an appetite as if he had been fasting all day.

• When the feast was over, the master of the house gave his guests gifts of *ghee* and butter and flour to take home with them. Yagna Sarma received his share, and put it in some earthen pots, and departed. Having gone some distance, he stopped to consider the gifts he had received, and putting the pots in a row, he looked at them with great satisfaction :

“ Here I am now at my ease,” he said. “ To-day I have a good bellyful ; to-morrow I can go without eating. But what shall I do with all these provisions ? I must sell them. And then what shall I do with the money I get ? I must buy a she-goat with it. And this she-goat ? She will bring forth kids for me, and in a little time I shall have a flock of them. I sell my flock, and with my money I buy a cow and a mare. My mare and my cow produce calves and foals, and these I sell for a good price, and in this way I find myself a man of considerable wealth. Everybody is talking about my fortune, one of my neighbouring Brahmins gives me his daughter. After the marriage, my wife is led to my house—great feasts given by my father-in-law and many presents. My wife soon reaches the age of child-bearing, and gives me a numerous posterity. My children must have the best teachers. I wish them to learn at an early age the sacred verses and the high knowledge. Rich as I am, it is also becoming that my wife and children should have an abundance of coloured garments and jewels of every sort.

“ But if my wife, in all this happiness, forgets her duties ! If she takes it into her head to go out of the house from time to time, without my permission, and to visit neighbouring houses for the pleasure of chattering with other women ! Just look at the state of things ! During her absence, the children she has left all alone, amuse themselves by running about wildly. Look ! they are going to run under the feet of the cows, and get lame for life ! Come ! Run to the house ! Ah, Great Gods ! What do I see ? My youngest child is injured ! Thou ! imprudent woman, thou ! art the cause of this ! Was ever so careless a creature seen ? But thou shalt answer for it ! I will teach thee to be more thoughtful in the future ! Take that ! . . . ”

And saying these words, Yagna Sarma gripped his pilgrim staff, and, brandishing it about with all his might, he struck the earthen pots in which were his *ghee* and milk and flour. So his provisions were scattered and lost. The fool overturned in a moment the foundation of his vain dreams. When he saw all his hopes vanish quicker than they had been formed, he groaned in secret over his shortsightedness, and, covered with shame, turned home.

THE HITOPADESA INDIAN, 600 A.D.

THE RAJAH'S SON AND THE MERCHANT'S WIFE

IN the country of Kanya-kubja there was a Rajah whose name was Veera-sena, by whom his royal son, by name Tungavala, had been appointed Yuva-rajah over the city of Veera-pura. He was young and possessed of great riches. Once upon a time, as he was walking about his own city, he took notice of a certain merchant's wife, who was in the very prime of youth, and so beautiful that she was, as it were, the standard of conquest of Makara-ketu. She also, whose name was Lavanyavatee, having observed him, her breast was rent in pieces by the destructive arrows of the god of love, and she gladly became of one mind with him. It is said :

"Unto women no man is to be found disagreeable, no one agreeable. They may be compared to a heifer on the plain that still longeth for fresh grass.

"Infidelity, violence, deceit, envy, extreme avariciousness, a total want of good qualities are the innate faults of womankind."

The young Rajah being returned to his palace, with a heart quite occupied with love, sent a female messenger to her, to whose words having attended, Lavanyavatee made such a reply as was calculated to deceive. Said she :

"I am faithful to my husband, and I am not accustomed even to touch another man ; for ' She is not worthy to be called a wife in whom the husband delighteth not. The husband is the asylum of women ; and of his honour the fire beareth testimony.

" ' The beauty of the Kokila is his voice ; the beauty of a wife is constancy to her husband ; the beauty of the ill-favoured is science ; the beauty of the penitent is patience.

" ' She is a wife who is clever in the house ; she is a wife who is fruitful in children ; she is a wife who is the soul of her husband ; she is a wife who is obedient to her husband.'

"And according to this doctrine, I make it a rule to do whatever the lord of my life directs, without examination."

- To this the messenger replied, "It is right."

And Lavanyavatee observed that it was even so.

The messenger, having heard the whole of what Lavanyavatee had to say, reported it to Tungavala, who observed that he would invite her with that dear husband of hers, and, in his presence, pay her great attention and respect. To this the messenger replied :

"This is impracticable. Let art be used ; for it is said, '*That which cannot be effected by force may be achieved by cunning.*' An elephant was killed by a jackal, by going over a swampy place."

Then the young Rajah, by the advice of his messenger, sent for the husband of Lavanyavatee, and, having treated him with great marks of attention, took him into his service, and employed him in the most confidential affairs. One day, when the young Rajah had bathed and had anointed himself, and was clothed in robes of gold, he said to the husband :

"Charudanta, I am going to give a feast to the goddess Gowree, which will last for a month, and this evening it shall commence. Go then, and just before night, bring to me a young maiden of singular beauty, and when she hath been presented, she shall have due respect paid to her, according to what is ordained."

Charudanta did as he was commanded, and brought to his master such a young woman as he had described ; and having delivered her, he privately resolved to find out how she was treated. The young Rajah, Tungavala, caused the young woman to sit down upon a rich sofa, and having entertained her with costly presents of cloth and garments, and given her a keepsake, he, that instant, sent her to her own house. Charudanta, having been a spectator of all which had passed, said to himself :

"This is a man of strict principle, who regardeth the woman of another as his own mother."

So after that, through the confidence created by this stratagem, his mind being biased by the lust of gain, he fetched his own wife and presented her ; and the young Rajah, upon beholding Lavanyavatee, the delight of his heart, exclaimed :

"Dear Lavanyavatee ! whither art thou going ?"

Saying this he got up from his seat, and, quite forgetful who was present, began to embrace her ; whilst Charudanta, the miserable husband, stood gazing at her, motionless as a statue.

And thus was a fool, by his own contrivance, plunged into the greatest distress.

THE HITOPADESA

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

ONE day a young man, whose name was Veera-vara, and who proved to be a Rajah-putra come from some distant country, presented himself before the porter who stood at the King's gate, and addressed him in the following words :

"I am a soldier in search of employment ; pray procure me a sight of the King."

The porter went to his master, and, bowing, told him that there was a soldier at the gate, just arrived from some distant country, who said his name was Veera-vara ; and the King, Subhraka, commanded him to be introduced. Accordingly the porter conducted the stranger into the presence of his master ; to whom, respectfully bowing, he addressed himself as follows :

"Sir, if thou hast any occasion for my service, let my pay be fixed."

The King asked him, "How much ?" and he replied, "Four hundred suvarnas a day."

"What weapons hast thou ?" demanded the King.

"My two arms," replied the soldier, "and my sword, which makes a third."

"This will not do," concluded the King ; upon which the soldier bowed, and took his leave.

The Minister happening to be present, said :

"Please your Highness, give him four days' pay, and learn what sort of a man he is, and what assistance he can be of."

According to the Minister's advice, the man being called back, they gave him Tamboola,¹ and four days' pay in advance ; to the expenditure of which the King very privately attended, and found that he gave one moiety to the gods and the Brahmins, one-fourth to the poor, and spent the remainder in food and amusements ; and that, after performing these several praiseworthy actions, he attended sword in hand at the King's gate day and night, and never went to his lodgings without his master's express permission.

On the fourteenth night of what is called the dark side of the moon, the King heard a noise like one bitterly crying, upon which

¹ Betel leaf—a token of friendship.

he called out to know who was waiting at the door, and his faithful Veera-vara answering that he was there, he ordered him to pursue the crying which they heard ; so, saying, " I obey your Highness's commands," away he ran.

In the meantime, the King reflected in this manner :

" I have done wrong to send this soldier away by himself in such a dark cloudy night. I will even go too and see what is the matter."

So saying, he took his sword, and thus followed till he got without the city ; and presently after he saw the soldier with a female endued with perfect youth and beauty, and richly attired, who was weeping.

" Who art thou, and why dost thou weep ? " demanded Veera-vara.

" I am," said the female, " the goddess Sree, the fortune of King Subhakra's dominions, who hath long dwelt happily under the shadow of his wings ; but, alas ! I am now about to flee to some other place of refuge."

" What, O goddess," said the soldier, " will induce thee to tarry still longer here ? "

" If," replied the goddess, " thou wilt offer up thy own son Sakti-vara, who is distinguished by two-and-thirty marks, to the goddess who presideth over the welfare of all nature, then will I remain here for a much longer period of time " ; and saying this, she vanished from his sight.

Veera-vara now went home, and called up his son and his wife, who were both asleep ; who having risen accordingly, he related to them everything which had passed with the goddess. His son, the moment he had concluded, exclaimed in a transport of joy :

" O how fortunate I am, who can thus be the means of preserving my Sovereign and his dominions ! Then, O father, what occasion is there for any further hesitation or delay ; since the assistance of this body is at all times ready upon such an occasion as this ? For they say :

" A good man should forsake wealth, and even life itself, for another. It is good to sacrifice one's self for a holy person upon the approach of his destruction."

" This simple saying belongs particularly to our tribe ; then if I am not permitted to do so, by what other act will the preservation of the prosperity of this great country be secured ? "

Having considered this proposal, they all went to the temple of the goddess ; and when they had worshipped her image, the father Veera-vara addressed her in these words :

" O goddess ! let Subhakra our Sovereign be prosperous ! and let this victim be accepted ! "

Saying which, he cut off his son's head.

"Thus," said he to himself, "have I earned the wages which I received from my Sovereign ; and now let me pay the forfeit of my son's life !" and instantly he cut off his own head.

His wife too, overpowered with grief for her husband and son, followed their example. The King, filled with astonishment at the scene before him, said to himself :

"Such little animals as myself come into life, and die away without end ; but there never has been, nor ever will be, in this world one like unto him !

"Oh, I can have no further enjoyment of these my dominions !"

Saying this, he lifted up his sword to cut off his head also ; but on the instant, she on whom dependeth the happiness of all, making herself evident under human form, seized him by the hand, and said : "My son, forbear this rashness ! At present thy kingdom is not subdued !"

The King prostrated himself before her, and said : "O goddess ! of what use to me is dominion, or even life ? If thou hast any compassion for me, O let Veera-vara, with his family, be restored to life ; or if it be not thy will, permit me to pursue the path wherein I was found by thee !"

The goddess replied : "I am well pleased with this thy noble generosity and tenderness ; then go thy ways, and prosper ; and let this man, his wife, and son, all rise up and live !"

The King rendered thanks, and returned unobserved to an apartment of his palace to sleep. Veera-vara too being restored to life, together with his wife and son, he conducted them home.

Veera-vara being again on guard at the King's door, and being questioned by him respecting the person who was heard crying, replied, that upon her being seen she became invisible, and that there were no further tidings of her. The King was exceedingly well pleased at this, and said within himself : "What a praiseworthy man he was," repeating these lines :

"He should speak kindly, without meanness ; he should be valiant, without boasting ; he should be generous, shedding his bounty into the dish of the worthy ; he should be resolute, but not harsh."

"This is the character of a great man ! In this there is all !"

In the morning early the King assembled a special council ; and when he had publicly proclaimed the proceedings of the night, he bestowed the government of Karnatta upon his generous deliverer.

HERODOTUS

485-425 B.C.

THE TREASURE OF KING RHAMPSINITUS

RHAMPSINITUS, King of Egypt, possessed a great quantity of money, such as no one of the succeeding kings was able to surpass, or even nearly come up to ; and he, wishing to treasure up his wealth in safety, built a chamber of stone, of which one of the walls adjoined the outside of the palace. But the builder, forming a plan against it, devised the following contrivance : he fitted one of the stones so that it might be easily taken out by two men, or even one. When the chamber was finished, the King laid up his treasures in it ; but in course of time the builder, finding his end approaching, called his sons to him, for he had two, and described to them how (providing for them that they might have abundant sustenance) he had contrived when building the King's treasury ; and having clearly explained to them everything relating to the removal of the stone, he gave them its dimensions, and told them, if they would observe his instructions, they would be stewards of the King's riches. He accordingly died, and the sons were not long in applying themselves to the work ; but having come by night to the palace, and having found the stone in the building, they easily removed it, and carried off a great quantity of treasure.

When the King happened to open the chamber, he was astonished at seeing the vessels deficient in treasure ; but he was not able to accuse anyone, as the seals were unbroken, and the chamber well secured. When therefore, on his opening it two or three times, the treasures were always evidently diminished (for the thieves did not cease plundering), he adopted the following plan : he ordered traps to be made, and placed them round the vessels in which the treasures were. But when the thieves came as before, and one of them had entered, as soon as he went near a vessel, he was straightway caught in the trap ; perceiving, therefore, in what a predicament he was, he immediately called to his brother, and told him what had happened, and bade him enter as quick as possible, and cut off his head, lest, if

he was seen and recognised, he should ruin him also : the other thought that he spoke well, and did as he was advised ; then, having fitted in the stone, he returned home, taking with him his brother's head.

When day came, the King having entered the chamber, was astonished at seeing the body of the thief in the trap without the head, but the chamber secure, and without any means of entrance or exit. In this perplexity he contrived the following plan : he hung up the body of the thief from the wall, and having placed sentinels there, he ordered them to seize and bring before him whomsoever they should see weeping or expressing commiseration at the spectacle.

The mother was greatly grieved at the body being suspended, and coming to words with her surviving son, commanded him, by any means he could, to contrive how he might take down and bring away the corpse of his brother ; but, should he neglect to do so, she threatened to go to the King, and inform him that he had the treasures.

When the mother treated her surviving son harshly, and when with many entreaties he was unable to persuade her, he contrived the following plan : having got some asses, and having filled some skins with wine, he put them on the asses, and then drove them along ; but when he came near the sentinels that guarded the suspended corpse, having drawn out two or three of the necks of the skins that hung down, he loosened them ; and when the wine ran out, he beat his head, and cried out aloud, as if he knew not to which of the asses he should turn first ; but the sentinels, when they saw wine flowing in abundance, ran into the road, with vessels in their hands, caught the wine that was being spilt, thinking it all their own gain ; but the man, feigning anger, railed bitterly against them all ; however, as the sentinels soothed him, he at length pretended to be pacified, and to forgo his anger ; at last he drove his asses out of the road, and set them to rights again. When more conversation passed, and one of the sentinels joked with him and moved him to laughter, he gave them another of the skins ; and they, just as they were, lay down and set to to drink, and joined him to their party, and invited him to stay and drink with them : he was persuaded, forsooth, and remained with them ; and as they treated him kindly during the drinking, he gave them another of the skins ; and the sentinels, having taken very copious draughts, became exceedingly drunk, and being overpowered by the wine, fell asleep on the spot where they had been drinking.

But he, as the night was far advanced, took down the body of his brother, and by way of insult shaved the right cheeks of all the sentinels ; then, having laid the corpse on the asses, he drove them home, having performed his mother injunctions,

* The King, when he was informed that the body of the thief had been stolen, was exceedingly indignant, and, resolving by any means to find out the contriver of this artifice, had recourse, *as it is said*, to the following plan, a design which to me seems incredible : he ordered his ^{own} daughter to go to a house of ill-fame and there receive all suitors for her favours, first compelling each one to tell her what he had done during his life most clever and most wicked, and whosoever should tell her the facts relating to the thief, she was to seize, and not suffer him to escape.

When, therefore, the daughter did what her father commanded, the thief, having ascertained for what purpose this contrivance was had recourse to, and being desirous to outdo the King in craftiness, did as follows : Having cut off the arm of a fresh corpse at the shoulder, he took it with him under his cloak, and having gone in to the King's daughter, and being asked the same questions as all the rest were, he related that he had done the most wicked thing when he cut off his brother's head who was caught in a trap in the King's treasury ; and the most clever thing, when, having made the sentinels drunk, he took away the corpse of his brother that was hung up. She, when she heard this, endeavoured to seize him, but the thief in the dark held out to her the dead man's arm, and she seized it and held it fast, imagining that she had got hold of the man's own arm ; then the thief, having let it go, made his escape through the door.

When this also was reported to the King, he was astonished at the shrewdness and daring of the man ; and at last, sending throughout all the cities, he caused a proclamation to be made, offering a free pardon, and promising great reward to the man, if he would discover himself.

The thief, relying on this promise, went to the King's palace ; and Rhampsinitus greatly admired him and gave him his daughter in marriage, accounting him the most knowing of all men ; for that the Egyptians are superior to all others, but he was superior to the Egyptians.

HERODOTUS

POLYCRATES AND HIS RING

THE exceeding good fortune of Polycrates, King of Samos, did not escape the notice of Amasis, King of Egypt, but was the cause of uneasiness to him ; and when his successes continued to increase, having written a letter in the following terms, he despatched it to Samos :

" Amasis to Polycrates says thus : It is pleasant to hear of the successes of a friend and ally. But your too great good fortune does not please me, knowing, as I do, that the divinity is jealous. As for me, I would rather choose that both I and those for whom I am solicitous, should be partly successful in our undertakings, and partly suffer reverses ; and so pass life, meeting with vicissitudes of fortune, than be prosperous in all things. For I cannot remember that I ever heard of any man who, having been constantly successful, did not at last utterly perish. Be advised therefore by me, and act thus with regard to your good fortune. Having considered what you can find that you value most, and the loss of which would most pain your soul, this so cast away, that it may never more be seen of man ; and if after this successes are not mingled interchangeably with reverses, again have recourse to the remedy I have suggested."

Polycrates, having read this letter, and conceived that Amasis had given him good advice, inquired of himself by the loss of which of his valuables he should most afflict his soul ; and on inquiry, he discovered the following : he had a seal which he wore, set in gold, made of an emerald, and it was the workmanship of Theodorus, the son of Telecles, a Samian ; when, therefore, he had determined to cast this away, he did as follows. Having manned a fifty-oared galley, he went on board it, and then gave orders to put out to sea ; and when he was a considerable distance from the island, he took off the seal, and, in the sight of all on board, threw it into the sea. This done, he sailed back again ; and having reached his palace, he mourned it as a great misfortune.

But on the fifth or sixth day after this, the following circumstance occurred : a fisherman, having caught a large and beautiful fish, thought it a present worthy to be given to Polycrates ; he accordingly carried it to the gates, and said that he wished to be admitted

to the presence of Polycrates ; and when this was granted, he presented the fish, and said :

" O King, having caught this, I did not think it right to take it to market, although I get my living by hard labour ; but it seemed to me worthy of you and your empire : I bring it, therefore, and present it to you."

He, pleased with these words, replied :

" You have done well, and I give you double thanks for your speech and your present, and I invite you to supper."

The fisherman, thinking a great deal of this, went away to his own home ; but the servants, opening the fish, found the seal of Polycrates in its belly ; and as soon as they had seen it, and taken it out, they carried it with great joy to Polycrates, and as they gave him the seal they acquainted him in what manner it had been found. But when it occurred to him that the event was superhuman, he wrote an account of what he had done, and of what had happened, and having written, he despatched the account to Egypt.

But Amasis, having read the letter that came from Polycrates, felt persuaded that it was impossible for man to rescue man from the fate that awaited him, and that Polycrates would not come to a good end, since he was fortunate in everything, and even found what he had thrown away ; having therefore sent a herald to Samos, he said that he must renounce his friendship. He did this, lest if some dreadful and great calamity befel Polycrates, he might himself be grieved for him, as for a friend.

THEOCRITUS

300 B.C.

THE LADIES OF SYRACUSE

A COUPLE of Syracusan women, staying at Alexandria, agree on the occasion of a great religious solemnity,—the feast of Adonis,—to go together to the palace of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, to see the image of Adonis, which the Queen Arsinoë, Ptolemy's wife, has had decorated with peculiar magnificence. A hymn, by a celebrated performer, is to be recited over the image. The names of the two women are Gorgo and Praxinoë; their maids are called Eunoe and Eutyphis. Gorgo has come by appointment to Praxinoë's house to fetch her.

Gorgo.—Is Praxinoë at home?

Praxinoë.—My dear Gorgo, at last! Yes, here I am. Eunoe, find a chair,—get a cushion for it.

Gorgo.—It will do beautifully as it is.

Praxinoë.—Do sit down.

Gorgo.—Oh, this gad-about spirit! I could hardly get to you, Praxinoë, through all the crowd and all the carriages. Nothing but heavy boots, nothing but men in uniform. And what a journey it is! My dear child, you really live *too* far off.

Praxinoë.—It is all that insane husband of mine. He has chosen to come out here to the end of the world, and take a hole of a place,—for a house it is not,—on purpose that you and I might not be neighbours. He is always just the same;—anything to quarrel with one! anything for spite!

Gorgo.—My dear, don't talk so of your husband before the little fellow. Just see how astonished he looks at you. Never mind, Zopyrio, my pet, she is not talking about papa.

Praxinoë.—Good heavens! the child does really understand.

Gorgo.—Pretty papa!

Praxinoë.—That pretty papa of his the other day (though I told him beforehand to mind what he was about), when I sent him to a shop to buy soap and rouge, brought me home salt instead;—stupid, great, big, interminable animal!

Gorgo.—Mine is just the fellow to him. . . . But never mind now,

get on your things and let us be off to the palace to see the Adonis, I hear the Queen's decorations are something splendid.

Praxinoe.—In grand people's houses everything is grand. What things you have seen in Alexandria! What a deal you will have to tell to anybody who has never been here!

Gorgo.—Come, we ought to be going.

Praxinoe.—Every day is holiday to people who have nothing to do. Eunoe, pick up your work; and take care, lazy girl, how you leave it lying about again; the cats find it just the bed they like. Come, stir yourself, fetch me some water, quick! I wanted the water first, and the girl brings me the soap. Never mind; give it me. Not all that, extravagant! Now pour out the water;—stupid! why don't you take care of my dress? That will do. I have got my hands washed as it pleased God. Where is the key of the large wardrobe? Bring it here;—quick!

Gorgo.—Praxinoe, you can't think how well that dress, made full, as you have got it, suits you. Tell me, how much did it cost?—the dress by itself, I mean.

Praxinoe.—Don't talk of it, Gorgo; more than eight pieces of good hard money. And about the work on it I have almost worn my life out.

Gorgo.—Well, you couldn't have done better.

Praxinoe.—Thank you. Bring me my shawl, and put my hat properly on my head;—properly. No, child (*to her little boy*), I am not going to take you; there's a bogy on horseback, who bites. Cry as much as you like; I'm not going to have you lamed for life. Now, we'll start. Nurse, take the little one and amuse him; call the dog in, and shut the street door. (*They go out.*) Good heavens! what a crowd of people! How on earth are we ever to get through all this? They are like ants: you can't count them. My dearest Gorgo, what will become of us? here are the Royal Horse Guards. My good man, don't ride over me! Look at that bay horse rearing bolt upright; what a vicious one! Eunoe, you mad girl, do take care!—that horse will certainly be the death of the man on his back. How glad I am now, that I left the child safe at home!

Gorgo.—All right, Praxinoe, we are safe behind them; and they have gone on to where they are stationed.

Praxinoe.—Well, yes, I begin to revive again. From the time I was a little girl I have had more horror of horses and snakes than of anything in the world. Let us get on; here's a great crowd coming this way upon us.

Gorgo (to an old woman).—Mother, are you from the palace?

Old Woman.—Yes, my dears.

Gorgo.—Has one a chance of getting there?

Old Woman.—My pretty young lady, the Greeks got to Troy by

dint of trying hard ; trying will do anything in this world.

Gorgo.—The old creature has delivered herself of an oracle and departed.

Praxinoe.—Women can tell you everything about everything, Jupiter's marriage with Juno not excepted.

Gorgo.—Look, Praxinoe, what a squeeze at the palace gates !

Praxinoe.—Tremendous ! Take hold of me, Gorgo ; and you, Eunoe, take hold of Eutychis !—tight hold, or you'll be lost. Here we go in all together. Hold tight to us, Eunoe ! Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! Gorgo, there's my scarf torn right in two. My good man, as you hope to be saved, take care of my dress !

Stranger.—I'll do what I can, but it doesn't depend upon me.

Praxinoe.—What heaps of people ! They push like a drove of pigs.

Stranger.—Don't be frightened, we are all right.

Praxinoe.—May you be all right, my dear sir, to the last day you live, for the care you have taken of us ! What a kind, considerate man ! There is Eunoe jammed in a squeeze. Push, you goose, push ! Capital ! We are all of us the right side of the door, as the bridegroom said when he had locked himself in with the bride.

Gorgo.—Praxinoe, come this way. Do but look at that work, how delicate it is !—how exquisite ! Why, they might wear it in heaven.

Praxinoe.—Heavenly patroness of needlewomen, what hands were hired to do that work ? Who designed those beautiful patterns ? They seem to stand up and move about, as if they were real ;—as if they were living things, and not needlework. Well, man is a wonderful creature ! And look, look, how charming he lies there on his silver couch, with just a soft down on his cheeks, that beloved Adonis,—Adonis, whom one loves even though he is dead !

Another Stranger.—You wretched women, do stop your incessant chatter ! Like turtles, you go on for ever. They are enough to kill one with their broad lingo,—nothing but *ā, ā, ā*.

Gorgo.—Lord, where does the man come from ! What is it to you if we are chatterboxes ? Order about your own servants ! Do you give orders to Syracusan women ? If you want to know, we came originally from Corinth, as Bellerophon did ; we speak Peloponnesian. I suppose Dorian women may be allowed to have a Dorian accent.

Praxinoe.—O, honey-sweet Proserpine, let us have no more masters than the one we've got ! We don't the least care for you ; pray don't trouble yourself for nothing.

Gorgo.—Be quiet, Praxinoe ! That first-rate singer, the Argive woman's daughter, is going to sing the *Adonis* hymn. She is the same who was chosen to sing the dirge last year. We are sure to have something first-rate from *her*. She is going through her airs and graces ready to begin.

Then the singer begins her hymn :—

"Mistress, who loveth the haunts of Golgi, and Idalium, and high-peaked Eryx, Aphrodite that playest with gold ! how have the delicate-footed Hours, after twelve months, brought thy Adonis back to thee from the ever-flowing Acheron ! Tardiest of the immortals are the boon Hours, but all mankind wait their approach with longing, for they ever bring something with them. O Cypris, Diore's child ! thou didst change—so is the story among men—Berenice from mortal to immortal, by dropping ambrosia into her fair bosom ; and in gratitude to thee for this, O thou of many names and many temples ! Berenice's daughter, Arsinoe, lovely Helen's living counterpart, makes much of Adonis with all manner of braveries.

"All fruits that the tree bears are laid before him, all treasures of the garden in silver baskets, and alabaster boxes, gold-inlaid, of Syrian ointment ; and all confectionery that cunning women make on their kneading tray, kneading up every sort of flowers with white meal, and all that they make of sweet honey and delicate oil, and all winged and creeping things are here set before him. And there are built for him green bowers with wealth of tender anise, and little boy-loves flutter about over them, like young nightingales trying their new wings on the tree, from bough to bough. Oh, the ebony, the gold, the eagle of white ivory that bears aloft his cup-bearer to Kronos-born Zeus ! And up there, see ! a second couch strewn for lovely Adonis, scarlet coverlets softer than sleep itself (so Miletus and the Samian wool-grower will say) ; Cypris has hers, and the rosy-armed Adonis has his, that eighteen or nineteen-year-old bridegroom. His kisses will not wound, the hair on his lip is yet light.

"Now, Cypris, good-night, we leave thee with thy bridegroom ; but to-morrow morning, with the earliest dew, we will one and all bear him forth to where the waves splash upon the sea-strand, and letting loose our locks, and letting fall our robes, with bosoms bare, we will set up this, our melodious strain :

"Beloved Adonis, alone of the demigods (so men say), thou art permitted to visit both us and Acheron ! This lot had neither Agamemnon nor the mighty moon-struck hero Ajax, nor Hector the first-born of Hecuba's twenty children, nor Patroclus, nor Pyrrhus who came home from Troy, not those yet earlier Lapithæ and the sons of Deucalion, nor the Pelasgians, the root of Argos and of Pelops' isle. Be gracious to us now, loved Adonis, and be favourable to us for the year to come ! Dear to us hast thou been at this coming, dear to us shalt thou be when thou comest again.' "

The hymn concluded, Gorgo says :

"Praxinoe, certainly women are wonderful things. That lucky

woman to know all that ! and luckier still to have such a splendid voice ! And now we must see about getting home. My husband has not had his dinner. That man is all vinegar, and nothing else ; and if you keep him waiting for his dinner, he's dangerous to go near. Adieu, precious Adonis, and may you find us all well when you come next year ! ”

PETRONIUS
1ST CENTURY A.D.

THE WIDOW OF EPHESUS

THERE was a married woman in Ephesus of such famous virtue that she drew women even from the neighbouring states to gaze upon her. So when she had buried her husband, the common fashion of following the procession with loose hair, and beating the naked breast in front of the crowd, did not satisfy her. She followed the dead man even to his resting-place, and began to watch and weep night and day over the body, which was laid in an underground vault in the Greek fashion. Neither her parents nor her relations could divert her from thus torturing herself and courting death by starvation; the officials were at last rebuffed and left her; every one mourned for her as a woman of unique character, and she was now passing her fifth day without food. A devoted maid sat by the failing woman, shed tears in sympathy with her woes, and at the same time filled up the lamp, which was placed in the tomb, whenever it sank. There was but one opinion throughout the city, every class of person admitting this was the one true and brilliant example of chastity and love.

At this moment the governor of the province gave orders that some robbers should be crucified near the small building where the lady was bewailing her recent loss. So on the next night, when the soldier who was watching the crosses to prevent anyone taking down a body for burial, observed a light shining plainly among the tombs, and heard a mourner's groans, a very human weakness made him curious to know who it was and what he was doing. So he went down into the vault, and on seeing a very beautiful woman, at first halted in confusion, as if he had seen a portent or some ghost from the world beneath. But afterwards noticing the dead man lying there, and watching the woman's tears and the marks of her nails on her face, he came to the correct conclusion, that she found her regret for the lost one unendurable.

He therefore brought his supper into the tomb, and began to urge the mourner not to persist in useless grief, and break her heart with unprofitable sobs, for all men made the same end and found the

same resting-place, and so on with the other platitudes which restore wounded spirits to health. But she took no notice of his sympathy, struck and tore her breast more violently than ever, pulled out her hair, and laid it on the dead body. Still the soldier did not retire, but tried to give the poor woman food with similar encouragements, until the maid, who was no doubt seduced by the smell of his wine, first gave in herself, and put out her hand at this kindly invitation, and then, refreshed with food and drink, began to assail her mistress's obstinacy, and say :

"What will you gain by all this, if you faint away with hunger, if you bury yourself alive, if you breathe out your undoomed soul before Fate calls for it ?

"Believest thou that the ashes or the spirit of the buried dead can feel thy woe ? Will you not begin life afresh ? Will you not shake off this womanish failing, and enjoy the blessings of the light so long as you are allowed ? Your poor dead husband's body here ought to persuade you to keep alive."

People are always ready to listen when they are urged to take a meal or to keep alive. So the lady, being thirsty after several days' abstinence, allowed her resolution to be broken down, and filled herself with food as greedily as the maid, who had been the first to yield.

Well, you know which temptation generally assails a man on a full stomach. The soldier used the same insinuating phrases which had persuaded the lady to consent to live, to conduct an assault upon her virtue. Her modest eye saw in him a young man, handsome, and eloquent. The maid begged her to be gracious, and then said :

"Wilt thou fight love even when love pleases thee ? Or dost thou never remember in whose lands thou art resting ? "

I need hide the fact no longer. The lady ceased to hold out, and the conquering hero won her over entire. So they passed not only their wedding night together, but the next and a third, of course shutting the door of the vault, so that any friend or stranger who came to the tomb would imagine that this most virtuous lady had breathed her last over her husband's body. Well, the soldier was delighted with the woman's beauty, and his stolen pleasure ; he bought up all the fine things permitted, and carried them to the tomb the moment darkness fell. So the parents of one of the crucified, seeing that the watch was ill-kept, took their man down in the dark and administered the last rite to him. The next day the soldier, seeing one of the crosses without its corpse, was in terror of punishment and explained to the lady what had happened. He declared that he would not wait for a court-martial, but would punish his own neglect with a thrust of his sword. So she had better get ready a place for a dying man, and let the gloomy vault enclose both her husband and her lover.

The lady's heart was tender as well as pure. "Heaven forbid," she replied, "that I should look at the same moment on the dead bodies of two men whom I love. No, I would rather make a dead man useful, than send a live man to death."

After this speech she ordered her husband's body to be taken out of the coffin and fixed up on the empty cross. The soldier availed himself of this far-seeing woman's advice, and the people wondered the next day by what means the dead man had ascended the cross.

APULEIUS

125 A.D.

CUPID AND PSYCHE

IN a certain city there lived a King and Queen, who had three daughters of remarkable beauty. The charms of the two elder—and they were very great—were still thought not to exceed all possible measure of praise ; but as for the youngest sister, human speech was too poor to express, much less adequately to extol, her exquisite and surpassing loveliness. In fact, multitudes of the citizens, and of strangers, whom the fame of this extraordinary spectacle gathered to the spot, were struck dumb with astonishment at her unapproachable beauty, and paid her religious adoration, just as though she were the goddess Venus herself.

This extraordinary transfer of celestial honours to a mortal maiden greatly incensed the real Venus ; and, unable to suppress her indignation, and shaking her head, in towering wrath, she thus soliloquized :

“ Behold how the primal parent of all things, behold how the first source of the elements, behold how I, the genial Venus of the whole world, am treated ! The honour belonging to my majesty shared by a mortal girl ! But this creature, whosoever she be, shall not so joyously usurp my honours ; for I will soon cause her to repent of her contraband good looks.”

Thus saying, the goddess forthwith summons her son, that winged and very malapert boy ; she points out Psyche to him (for that was the name of the maiden), and after telling him the whole story about that mortal's rivalry of her own beauty, groaning with rage and indignation, she said :

“ I conjure you by the ties of maternal love, by the sweet wounds inflicted by your arrow, by the warmth, delightful as honey, of that torch, to afford your parent her revenge, ay, and a full one too, and as you respect myself, severely punish this rebellious beauty ; and this one thing, above all, use all your endeavours to effect : let this maiden be seized with the most burning love for the lowest of mankind, one whom fortune has stripped of rank, patrimony, and even of personal safety ; one so degraded, that he cannot find his equal in

wretchedness throughout the whole world."

Having thus said, and long and tenderly kissed her son, she sought the neighbouring margin of the shore on which the waves ebb and flow, and, with rosy feet, brushing along the topmost spray of the dancing waters, behold ! she took her seat on the watery surface of the main ; where the powers of the deep, the instant that she conceived the wish, appeared at once, as though she had previously commanded their attendance.

• In the meantime, Psyche, with all her exquisite beauty, derived no advantage whatever from her good looks ; she was gazed on by all, praised by all, and yet no one, king, noble, or plebeian even, came to woo her for his bride. They admired, no doubt, her divine beauty, but then they all admired it as they would a statue exquisitely wrought. Long before this, her two elder sisters, whose more moderate charms had not been bruited abroad among the nations, had been wooed by kings, and happily wedded to them ; but Psyche, forlorn virgin, sat at home, bewailing her lonely condition, faint in body and sick at heart ; and hated her own beauty, though it delighted all the rest of the world.

The wretched father of this most unfortunate daughter, suspecting the enmity of the gods, and dreading their wrath, consulted the very ancient oracle of Apollo, and sought of that mighty divinity, with prayers and victims, a husband for the maiden whom no one cared to have. But Apollo, though a Grecian and an Ionian, by right of the founder of Miletus, delivered an oracle to the following effect :

" On some high mountain's craggy summit place
The virgin, deck'd for deadly nuptial rites ;
Nor hope a son-in-law of mortal race,
But a dire mischief, viperous and fierce ;
Who flies through æther, and with fire and sword
Tires and debilitates whate'er exists,
Terrific to the powers that reign on high."—Taylor.

The King, who had led a happy life till then, on hearing the announcement of the sacred oracle, returned home sad and slow, and disclosed to his wife the behests of inauspicious fate. Many days together were passed in grief and tears and lamentation. But time pressed, and the dire oracle had now to be fulfilled. The procession was formed for the deadly nuptials of the ill-fated maiden ; and the weeping Psyche walks not to her nuptials, but to her obsequies. And while her woe-begone parents, overwhelmed with horror, strove to delay the execution of the abominable deed, the daughter herself thus exhorted them to compliance :

" Why torment your unfortunate old age with continual weeping ?
Why waste your breath, which is more dear to me than to you, with

repeated lamentations ? Too late do you perceive that you have been smitten by the deadly shaft of envy. Alas ! then should you have wept and lamented, then bewailed me as lost, when tribes and nations celebrated me with divine honours, and when, with one consent, they styled me a new-born Venus. Now do I feel and see that through that name of Venus alone I perish. Lead me away, then, and expose me on the rock to which the oracle has devoted me ; I am in haste to encounter these auspicious nuptials ; I am in haste to see this noble bridegroom of mine. Why should I delay ? Why avoid his approach, who has been born for the destruction of the whole world ? ”

The maiden, after these words, said no more, but with unfaltering steps, took her place in the multitudinous procession. They advanced to the destined rock on a lofty mountain, and left the maiden alone on the summit ; the nuptial torches, with which they had lighted their way, were now extinguished in their tears, and thrown aside, the ceremony was at an end, and with drooping heads they took their homeward way. Meanwhile, as Psyche lay trembling and weeping in dismay on the summit of the rock, the mild breeze of the gently-blowing Zephyr played round her garments, fluttering and gradually expanding them till they lifted her up, and the god, wafting her with his tranquil breath adown the lofty mountain side, laid her softly on the flowery turf in the lap of the valley.

Psyche, therefore, delightfully reclining in this pleasant and grassy spot, upon a bed of dewy herbage, felt her extreme agitation of mind allayed, and sank into a sweet sleep, from which she awoke refreshed in body, and with a mind more composed. She then espied a grove, thick planted with vast and lofty trees ; she likewise saw a fountain in the middle of the grove, with water limpid as crystal. Near the fall of the fountain there was a kingly palace, not raised by human hands, but by divine skill. You might know, from the very entrance of the palace, that you were looking upon the splendid and delightful abode of some god.

Invited by the delightful appearance of the place, Psyche approached it, and, gradually taking courage, stepped over the threshold. The beauty of what she beheld lured her on, and everything filled her with admiration. In another part of the palace, she beheld magnificent repositories, stored with immense riches. But not one human being could she see, she only heard words that were uttered, and had voices alone for the servants. An exquisite banquet was served up, some one entered, and sang unseen, while another struck the lyre, which was no more visible than himself. Then, a swell of voices, as of a multitude singing in full chorus, was wafted to her ears, though not one of the vocalists could she descry.

After these delights had ceased, the evening now persuading to

repose, Psyche retired to bed ; and when the night was far advanced, a certain gentle, murmuring sound fell upon her ears. Then, alarmed for her honour, in consequence of the profound solitude of the place, she trembled and was filled with terror, and dreaded that of which she was ignorant more than any misfortune. And now her unknown bridegroom ascended the couch, made Psyche his wife, and hastily left her before break of day. This course was continued for a length of time ; and, as by nature it has been so ordained, the novelty, by its constant repetition, afforded her delight, and the sound of the voices was the solace of her solitude.

In the meantime, her parents were wasting their old age in sorrow and lamentation ; and the report of her fate, becoming more widely extended, her elder sisters had learnt all the particulars ; whereupon, leaving their homes in deep grief, they hastened to visit and comfort their parents. On that night did Psyche's husband thus address her—for she could discern his presence with her ears and hands, though not with her eyes :

" Most charming Psyche, dear wife, cruel fortune now threatens you with a deadly peril, which needs, I think, to be guarded against with the most vigilant attention. For ere long, your sisters, who are alarmed at the report of your death, in their endeavours to discover traces of you, will arrive at yonder rock. If, then, you should chance to hear their lamentations, make them no reply, no, nor even so much as turn your eyes towards them. By doing otherwise, you will cause most grievous sorrow to me, and utter destruction to yourself."

Psyche assented, and promised that she would act agreeably to her husband's desire. But when he and the night had departed together, she, inconsolable, consumed the whole day in tears and lamentations, exclaiming over and over again that she was now utterly lost, since, besides being thus confined in a splendid prison, deprived of human conversation, she was not even allowed to relieve the minds of her sisters, who were sorrowing for her, nor, indeed, so much as to see them. Without having refreshed herself, therefore, with the bath or with food, or, in fact, with any solace whatever, but weeping plenteously, she retired to rest. Shortly afterwards, her husband, coming to her bed earlier than usual, embraced her as she wept, and thus expostulated with her :

" Is this, my Psyche, what you promised me ? What am I, your husband, henceforth to expect of you ? What can I now hope for, when neither by day nor by night, not even in the midst of our conjugal endearments, you cease to be distracted with grief ? Very well, then, act now just as you please, and comply with the baneful distates of your inclination. However, when you begin too late to repent, you will recall to mind my serious admonitions."

Upon this, she had recourse to prayers ; and threatening that she would put an end to herself if her request were denied, she extorted from her husband a consent that she might see her sisters, to soothe their grief, and enjoy their conversation. This he yielded to the entreaties of his new-made wife, and he gave her permission, besides, to present her sisters with as much gold and as many jewels as she pleased ; but he warned her repeatedly, and so often as to terrify her, never, on any occasion, to be persuaded by the pernicious advice of her sisters, to make any inquiries concerning the form of her husband ; lest, by a sacrilegious curiosity, she might cast herself down from such an exalted position of good fortune, and never again feel his embraces.

She thanked her husband for his indulgence ; and now, having quite recovered her spirits, " Nay," said she, " I would suffer death a hundred times rather than be deprived of your most delightful company, for I love you, yes, I adore you to desperation, whoever you are, ay, even as I love my own soul, nor would I give you in exchange for Cupid himself. But this also I beseech you to grant to my prayers ; bid Zephyr, this servant of yours, convey my sisters to me, in the same manner in which he brought me hither."

Her husband, overcome by the power of love, yielded reluctantly, and promised all she desired. After this upon the approach of morning, he again vanished from the arms of his wife.

Meanwhile, the sisters, having inquired the way to the rock on which Psyche was abandoned, hastened thither ; and there they wept and beat their breasts till the rocks and crags resounded with their lamentations. They called to their unfortunate sister, by her own name, until the shrill sound of their voices descending the declivities of the mountain, reached the ears of Psyche, who ran out of her palace in delirious trepidation, and exclaimed :

" Why do you needlessly afflict yourselves with doleful lamentations ? Here am I, whom you mourn ; cease those dismal accents, and now at last dry up those tears that have so long bedewed your cheeks, since you may now embrace her whom you have been lamenting."

Then, summoning Zephyr, she acquaints him with her husband's commands, in obedience to which, instantly wafting them on his gentlest breeze, he safely conveys them to Psyche. Now do they enjoy mutual embraces, and hurried kisses ; and their tears, that had ceased to flow, return, after a time, summoned forth by joy.

" Now come," said Psyche, " enter my dwelling in gladness, and cheer up your afflicted spirits with your Psyche."

Having thus said, she showed them the vast treasures of her golden palace, and sumptuously refreshed them in a most beautiful bath, and with the delicacies of a divine banquet ; until, satiated

with this copious abundance of celestial riches, they began to nourish envy in the lowest depths of their breasts. One of them, especially, very minute and curious, persisted in making inquiries about the master of this celestial wealth, what kind of person, and what sort of husband he made.

Psyche, however, would by no means violate her husband's injunctions, or disclose the secrets of her breast ; but, devising a tale for the occasion, told them that he was a young man, and very good-looking, and that he was, for the most part, engaged in rural occupations, and hunting on the mountains. And lest, by any slip in the course of the protracted conversation, her secret counsels might be betrayed, having loaded them with ornaments of gold and jewelled necklaces, she called Zephyr, and ordered him at once to convey them back again.

This being immediately executed, these excellent sisters, as they were returning home, now burning more and more with the rancour of envy, conversed much with each other ; at last one of them thus began :

" Do but see how blind, cruel, and unjust Fortune has proved ! Were you, my sister, delighted to find that we, born of the same parents, had met with such a different lot ? We, indeed, who are the elder, are delivered over as bondmaids to foreign husbands, and live in banishment from our home, our native land, and our parents ; and this, the youngest of us all, is raised to the enjoyment of such boundless wealth, and has a god for her husband, she who does not even know how to enjoy, in a proper manner, such an abundance of blessings ? While I, wretched creature, am tied to a husband who, in the first place, is older than my father ; and who, in the next place, is balder than a pumpkin, and more dwarfish than any boy, and who fastens up every part of his house with bolts and chains."

" But I," replied the other sister, " have got to put up with a husband who is tormented and crippled with gout ; and who, on this account, seldom honours me with his embraces, while I have to be everlastingly rubbing his distorted and chalky fingers with filthy fomentations, nasty rags, and stinking poultices ; scalding these delicate hands, and acting the part not of a wife, but of a female doctor. You, sister, seem to bear all this with a patient, or rather a servile spirit, but, for my part, I can no longer endure that such a fortunate destiny should have so undeservedly fallen to her lot. And then, recollect in what a haughty and arrogant manner she behaved towards us, and how, by her boasting and immoderate ostentations, she betrayed a heart swelling with pride, and how reluctantly she threw us a trifling portion of her immense riches ; and immediately after, being weary of our company, ordered us to be turned out, and to be puffed and whisked away. But may I be no woman, nor

indeed may I breathe, if I do not hurl her down headlong from such mighty wealth. In the first place, then, let us not show these things that we have got, either to our parents or to any one else ; in fact, we are to know nothing at all about her safety. For the present, let us away to our husbands, and revisit our poor and plain dwellings, that, after long and earnest consideration, we may return the better prepared to humble her pride."

This wicked project was voted good by the two wicked sisters. Concealing those choice and sumptuous presents which they had received from Psyche, tearing their hair, and beating their faces, which well deserved such treatment, they redoubled their pretended grief. In this manner, too, hastily leaving their parents, after having set their sorrows bleeding afresh, they returned to their homes, swelling with malicious rage, and plotting wicked schemes, nay, actual murder against their innocent sister.

In the meantime, Psyche's unknown husband once more admonished her thus in their nocturnal conversation :

"Are you aware what a mighty peril Fortune is preparing to launch against you from a distance, one too, which, unless you take strenuous precautions against it, will ere long confront you, hand to hand ? Those perfidious she-wolves are planning base stratagems against you with all their might, to the end that they may prevail upon you to view my features, which, as I have often told you, if you once see, you will see no more. If, then, these most abominable vampires come again, armed with their baneful intentions, and that they will come I know full well, do not hold any converse whatever with them ; but if, through your natural frankness and tenderness of disposition, you are not able to do this, at all events be careful not to listen to or answer any inquiries about your husband. For before long we shall have an increase to our family, and infant as you are, you are pregnant with another infant, which, if you preserve my secret in silence, will be born divine, but if you profane it, will be mortal."

Radiant with joy at this news, Psyche exulted in the glory of this future pledge of love, and in the dignity of a mother's name.

But now those pests and most dire Furies, breathing viperous virulence, were hastening towards her with the speed of ruthless hate. Then again her husband warned his Psyche to this effect during his brief visit :

"The day of trial, and this most utter calamity, are now at hand. Your own malicious sex, and your own blood, in arms against you, have struck their camp, drawn up their forces in battle array, and sounded the charge. Now are your wicked sisters aiming with the drawn sword at your throat. Alas ! darling Psyche, by what mighty dangers are we now surrounded ! Take pity on yourself and

on me ; and by an inviolable silence, rescue your home, your husband, yourself, and that little one of ours from this impending destruction. Shun those wicked women, whom, after the deadly hatred which they have conceived against you, and having trampled under foot the ties of blood, it were not right to call sisters ; neither see, nor listen to them, when, like Sirens, hanging over the crag, they shall make the rocks resound with their ill-omened voices."

Psyche, in accents by sobs and tears, thus replied :

"Already, methinks, you have experienced convincing proofs of my fidelity and power of keeping a secret. Only order Zephyr once again to discharge his duties, and at least grant me a sight of my sisters, by way of compensation for your own hallowed form. Indulge me with the gratification of embracing my sisters, and refresh with joyousness the soul of Psyche, who is so devoted and so dear to you. Then no longer I shall be anxious to view your features. Henceforth, not even the shades of night will have any effect on me. I clasp you in my arms, and you are my light."

Enchanted by these words, and by her honeyed embraces, her husband brushed away her tears with his locks, and assuring her that he would do as she wished, instantly anticipated the light of the dawning day by flight. But the pair of sisters who had engaged in this conspiracy, not having so much as visited their parents, direct their course with precipitate haste straight from the ships towards the rock, and not waiting for the present of the buoyant breeze, leap into the abyss with ungovernable rashness. Zephyr, however, not forgetful of the royal commands, received them, though reluctantly, in the bosom of the breathing breeze, and laid them on the ground.

With rapid steps and without a moment's delay, they entered the palace, and deceitfully screening themselves under the name of sister, embraced their prey ; then, covering a whole store-house of deeply hidden treachery beneath a joyous countenance, they thus addressed her in flattering terms :

"Psyche, you are not quite so slender as you used to be. Why, you will be a mother before long. Can you fancy with what exceeding joy you will gladden our whole house ! O how delighted we shall be to nurse this golden baby, for if it only equals the beauty of its parents, it will be born a perfect Cupid."

Thus, by a false appearance of affection, they gradually stole upon the heart of their sister, while she, after making them sit awhile to recover from the fatigue of their journey and refresh themselves with warm baths, regaled them in a marvellously splendid manner with innumerable exquisite dainties.

But the malice of these wicked women was not softened or lulled to rest even by the dulcet sweetness of the music ; but, shaping their

conversation so as to lead Psyche into the intended snare, they began insidiously to inquire what sort of a person her husband was, and from what family he was descended. She, in her extreme simplicity, having forgotten her former account, invented a new story about her husband, and said he was a native of the adjoining province; that he was a merchant, with abundance of money, a man of middle age, with a few grey hairs sprinkled here and there on his head. Then, abruptly terminating the conversation, she again committed them to their windy vehicle, after having loaded them with costly presents.

While they were returning homewards, soaring aloft on the tranquil breath of Zephyrus, they thus interchanged their thoughts with each other:

"What are we to say, sister, of the monstrous lies of that silly creature? At one time her husband is a young man, with the down just beginning to show itself on his chin; at another he is of middle age, and his hair begins to be silvered with grey. Who can this be, whom a short space of time thus suddenly changes into an old man? And yet, if she really is ignorant of the appearance of her husband, she must no doubt have married a god, and then through this pregnancy of hers she will be presenting us with a god. At all events, if she does happen, which heaven forbid! to become the mother of a divine infant, I shall instantly hang myself."

The sisters, thus inflamed with passion, called on their parents in a careless and disdainful manner, and after being kept awake all night by the turbulence of their spirits, made all haste at morning to the rock, whence, by the usual assistance of the breeze, they descended swiftly to Psyche, and with tears squeezed out, by rubbing their eyelids, thus craftily addressed her:

"Happy indeed are you, and fortunate in your very ignorance of a misfortune of such magnitude. There you sit, without a thought upon your danger; while we, who watch over your interests with the most vigilant care, are in anguish at your lost condition. For we have learned for a truth, nor can we, as being sharers in your sorrows and misfortunes conceal it from you, that it is an enormous serpent, gliding along in many folds and coils, with a neck swollen with deadly venom, and prodigious gaping jaws, that secretly sleeps with you by night. Do for a moment recall to mind the Pythian oracle, which declared that you were destined to become the wife of a fierce and truculent animal. Besides, many of the husbandmen, who are in the habit of hunting all round the country, and ever so many of the neighbours, have observed him returning home from his feeding-place in the evening, and swimming across the shoals of the neighbouring stream. All declare, too, that he will not long continue to pamper you with delicacies, but that as soon as ever you are a mother he will devour you, as a most exquisite morsel."

Poor, simple, tender-hearted Psyche was aghast with horror at this dreadful story ; and, quite bereft of her senses, lost all remembrance of her husband's admonitions and of her own promises, and hurled herself headlong into the very abyss of calamity. Trembling, therefore, with pale and livid cheeks, and with an almost lifeless voice, she faltered out these broken words :

" Dearest sisters, you have acted towards me as you ought, and with your usual affectionate care ; and indeed it appears to me that those who gave you this information have not invented a falsehood. For, in fact, I have never yet beheld my husband's face, nor do I know at all whence he comes. I only hear him speak in an undertone by night, and have to bear with a husband of an unknown appearance, and one that has an utter aversion to the light of day : I consequently have full reason to be of your opinion, that he may be some monster or other. Besides, he is always terrifying me from attempting to behold him, and threatens some shocking misfortune as the consequence of indulging any curiosity to view his features. Now, therefore, if you are able to give any saving aid to your sister in this perilous emergency, defer it not for a moment."

Finding the approaches thus laid open, and their sister's heart exposed all naked to their attacks, these wicked women thought the time was come to sally out from their covered approach and attack the timorous thoughts of the simple girl with the drawn sword of deceit. Accordingly, one of them thus began :

" Since the ties of blood oblige us to have no fear of peril before our eyes when your safety is to be ensured, we will discover to you the only method which will lead to your preservation, and one which has been considered by us over and over again. On that side of the bed where you are accustomed to lie, secretly conceal a very sharp razor, one that you have whetted to a keen edge by passing it over the palm of your hand ; and hide likewise under some covering of the surrounding tapestry a lamp, well trimmed and full of oil, and shining with a bright light. Make these preparations with the utmost secrecy, and after the monster has glided into the bed as usual, when he is now stretched out at length, fast asleep and breathing heavily, then slide out of bed, go softly along with bare feet and on tiptoe, free the lamp from its place of concealment in the dark, and borrow the aid of its light to execute your noble purpose ; then at once, boldly raising your right hand, bring down the keen weapon with all your might, and cut off the head of the noxious serpent at the nape of the neck. Nor shall our assistance be wanting to you ; for we will keep anxious watch, and be with you the very instant you shall have effected your own safety by his death ; and then, immediately bringing you away with all these things, we will wed you, to your wish, with a human creature like yourself."

Having with such pernicious language inflamed the mind of their sister, and wrought her to a perfect pitch of determination, they deserted her, fearing exceedingly even to be in the neighbourhood of such a catastrophe ; and, being laid upon the rock by the wonted impulse of their winged bearer, they immediately hurried thence with impetuous haste, at once got on board their ships, and sailed away.

But Psyche, now left alone, except so far as a person who is agitated by maddening Furies is not alone, fluctuated in sorrow like a stormy sea ; and, though her purpose was fixed and her heart was resolute when she first began to make preparations for the impious work, her mind now wavers, and is distracted with numerous apprehensions at her unhappy fate.

The night came, and with it came her husband, and after their first dalliance was over, he fell into a deep sleep. Then Psyche, to whose weak body and spirit the cruel influence of fate imparted unusual strength, uncovered the lamp, and seized the knife with masculine courage. But the instant she advanced the lamp, and the mysteries of the couch stood revealed, she beheld the very gentlest and sweetest of all wild creatures, even Cupid himself, the beautiful God of Love, there fast asleep ; at sight of whom, the joyous flame of the lamp shone with redoubled vigour and the sacrilegious razor repented the keenness of its edge.

But as for Psyche, astounded at such a sight, losing the control of her senses, faint, deadly pale, and trembling all over, she fell on her knees, and made an attempt to hide the blade in her own bosom ; and this no doubt she would have done, had not the blade, dreading the commission of such a crime, glided out of her rash hand. And now, faint and unnerved as she was, she feels herself refreshed at heart by gazing upon the beauty of those divine features. She looks upon the genial locks of his golden head, the orbed curls that strayed over his milk-white neck and roseate cheeks, and fell gracefully entangled, some before, some behind ; causing the very light of the lamp itself to flicker by their radiant splendour. On the shoulders of the volatile god were dewy wings of brilliant whiteness ; and though the pinions were at rest, yet the tender down that fringed the feathers wantoned to and fro in tremulous unceasing play. At the foot of the bed lay his bow, his quiver, and his arrows, the auspicious weapons of the mighty god.

While with unsatiable wonder and curiosity Psyche is examining and admiring her husband's weapons, she draws one of the arrows out of the quiver, and touches the point with the tip of her thumb to try its sharpness ; but happening to press too hard, for her hand still trembled, she punctured the skin, so that some tiny drops of rosy blood oozed forth ; and thus did Psyche, without knowing it, fall in

love with LOVE. Then, gazing passionately on his face, and fondly kissing him again and again, her only fear was lest he should wake too soon.

But while she hung over him bewildered with delight, the lamp, whether from treachery or baneful envy, or because it longed to touch, and to kiss, as it were, such a beautiful object, spirted a drop of scalding oil from the summit of its flame upon the right shoulder of the god.

The god, thus scorched, sprang from the bed, and seeing the disgraceful tokens of forfeited fidelity, without a word was flying away from the eyes and arms of his most unhappy wife. But Psyche, the instant he rose, seized hold of his right leg with both hands, and hung on to him, a wretched appendage to his flight through the regions of the air, till at last her strength failed her and she fell to the earth.

Her divine lover, however, not deserting her as she lay on the ground, alighted upon a neighbouring cypress tree, and thus angrily addressed her from its lofty top :

"O simple, simple Psyche, for you I have been unmindful of the commands of my mother Venus ; for when she bade me cause you to be infatuated with passion for some base and abject man, I chose rather to fly to you myself as a lover. I, that redoubtable archer, have wounded myself with my own arrow, and have made you my wife, that I, forsooth, might be thought by you to be a serpent, and that you might cut off my head, which bears those very eyes which have so doated upon you. This was the danger that I told you again and again to be on your guard against, this was what I so benevolently forewarned you of. But as for those choice counsellors of yours, they shall speedily feel my vengeance for giving you such pernicious advice ; but you I will punish only by my flight."

And so saying, he soared aloft, and flew away.

Meanwhile Psyche lay prostrate on the ground, gazing on the flight of her husband as long as ever he remained in sight, and afflicting her mind with the most bitter lamentations. But when the reiterated movement of his wings had borne her husband through the immensity of space till she saw him no more, she threw herself headlong from the bank of the adjacent river into its stream. But the gentle river, honouring the god, who is in the habit of imparting his warmth to the waters themselves, and fearing his power, bore her on the surface of a harmless wave to the bank, and laid her safe on its flowery turf.

Departing from the spot, after she had toiled some little way along the road, she came at last to an unknown by-path, and following it, she arrived at a certain city, of which the husband of one of her sisters was king. On learning his circumstance, Psyche requested that her arrival might be announced to her sister. Being imme-

diately conducted to her, when they had mutually embraced, and the forms of salutation were over, on her sister inquiring the cause of her visit, she replied :

"Of course you remember the advice you gave me, when you persuaded me to destroy with a sharp razor the beast that lay with me under the assumed name of a husband, before he should swallow me, poor creature, in his voracious maw. I proceeded to do as we had arranged ; but as soon as ever I discerned his features by the light of the lamp, I beheld a sight truly wonderful and divine, the very son himself of the goddess Venus, Cupid I say, sunk in tranquil repose. Just, however, as, struck with astonishment at the sight of such a boundless blessing, and in utter ecstasy through an overabundance of pleasure, I was at a loss how sufficiently to enjoy my fortune, by a most shocking accident, the lamp spirted out some scalding oil upon his right shoulder. Instantly awakened by the pain, and seeing me armed with the weapon and the light, 'For this shameful conduct,' said he, 'quit my bed this instant, I divorce you for ever. I will at once marry your sister,'—mentioning you expressly by name,—and then he ordered Zephyr to waft me beyond the precincts of the palace."

Scarcely had Psyche ended her narrative, when the other, goaded by maddening lust and baneful envy, deceived her husband by a story which she had ready invented, as though she had heard something about the death of her parents, and immediately embarking, proceeded to the same rock. When she arrived there, though another wind was blowing, yet, elated with blind hope, she exclaimed:

"Receive me, Cupid, a wife worthy of thee, and thou, Zephyr, acknowledge thy mistress."

Then with a great bound, she threw herself headlong from the mountain ; but neither alive nor dead was she able to reach the spot she sought. For her limbs were torn in pieces by the crags, and scattered here and there as she fell, her entrails were rent asunder, just as she deserved ; and so, furnishing a banquet for birds and beasts of prey, she perished.

Nor was the other sister's punishment long delayed ; for Psyche's wandering steps led her to another city, in which that sister dwelt ; and she also, deceived by the same tale, and impiously desirous of supplanting Psyche as a wife, hastened to the rock, and there met with her death in a similar manner.

In the meantime, while Psyche wandered through various nations, anxiously searching for Cupid, he himself, with the wound from the lamp, lay in his mother's chamber groaning. A snow-white sea-gull, the bird which skims along the waves of the sea, flapping them with its wings, dived down into the bosom of the ocean. There, approaching Venus, as she bathed and swam, he informed her that her son was

confined to his bed by a severe burn, was in great pain, and his cure was doubtful : that all sorts of scandalous reports were flying about concerning the whole family of Venus ; and it was in everybody's mouth that mother and son had gone off, the one to a mountain, to carry on an intrigue with a girl ; the other to amuse herself with swimming in the sea.

Thus did this talkative and very meddling bird chatter in the ear of Venus, to lower her son in her estimation.

Venus, exceedingly enraged, instantly exclaimed :

" So then this hopeful son of mine has already got some mistress or other. Come, now, you who are the only one to serve me with true affection, what is the name of her who has thus decoyed the ingenuous and beardless boy ? "

The talkative bird was only too ready to reply :

" I am not quite sure, mistress. I think, though, if I remember right, he is said to have fallen desperately in love with a girl whose name is Psyche."

" What ! " exclaimed Venus, in a burst of indignation, " of all wenches in the world, is he in love with Psyche, the usurper of my beauty, and the rival of my fame ? And by way of additional insult, he takes me for a go-between, through whose instrumentality he made acquaintance with the girl."

Thus exclaiming, she forthwith emerged from the sea, and hastened to her golden chamber, where, finding her son lying ill, as she had been informed, she cried out as loud as ever she could before she entered the door :

" This is pretty conduct, indeed ! and very becoming our dignified birth, and your sobriety of character. In the first place, to trample under foot the commands of your mother, your sovereign mistress, and refrain from tormenting my enemy with an ignoble love, and then at your age, a mere boy, to take her to your profligate and immature embraces, on purpose, I suppose, that I might endure the vexation of having my enemy for my daughter-in-law. But I will make you repent of these tricks of yours and that you shall find this match a sour and bitter one."

Having thus vented her wrath, she rushed impetuously out of doors, and was immediately accosted by Ceres and Juno, who, observing her angry countenance, asked her why she marred the beauty of her sparkling eyes by such a sullen frown.

" Most opportunely are you come," she replied, " to appease that violence which has taken possession of my raging bosom. Inquire for me, I beg, with the utmost care and diligence after that runaway vagabond, Psyche ; for the infamous stories about my family, and the conduct of my son who does not deserve to be named, cannot be unknown to you."

The two goddesses, knowing what had happened, endeavoured lightly to mitigate the rage of Venus. But she, indignant that her injuries were not treated with more respect, turned her back upon them, and with hasty steps again betook herself to the ocean.

In the meantime Psyche wandered about, day and night, restlessly seeking her husband, and the more anxious to find him, because, though she had incurred this anger, she hoped to appease him, if not by the tender endearments of a wife, at least by entreaties as humble as a slave could urge. Perceiving a temple on the summit of a lofty mountain,

"How can I tell," said she, "but yonder may be the residence of my lord?"

And immediately she hastened thither, while, wayworn and exhausted as she was, hope and affection quickened her steps, and gave her vigour to climb the highest ridges of the mountain and enter the temple. There she saw blades of wheat, some in sheaves, some twisted into chaplets, and ears of barley also. There were scythes likewise, and all the implements of harvest, but all lying scattered about in confusion, just as such things are usually thrown down, in the heat of summer, from the careless hands of the reapers.

Psyche began carefully to sort all these things, and arrange them properly in their several places, deeming it her duty not to fail in respect for the temples and ceremonies of any deity, but to implore the benevolent sympathy of all the gods. Bounteous Ceres found her thus diligently employed in her temple, and cried to her, from a distance:

"Ah, poor unfortunate Psyche! Venus, full of rage, is eagerly tracking your footsteps, craving to inflict upon you the deadly penalties, and the whole force of her divine vengeance. And can you then busy yourself with my concerns, and think of anything else but your own safety?"

Psyche, prostrating herself before the goddess, moistening her feet with abundant tears, and sweeping the ground with her locks, besought her protection with manifold prayers.

"I implore thee," said she, "by thy fruit-bearing right hand, by the joyful ceremonies of harvest, by the winged car of the dragons thy servants, by the furrows of the Sicilian soil, by the chariot of Pluto, by the earth that closed upon him, by the dark descent and unlighted nuptials of Proserpine, by the torch-illuminated return of thy recovered daughter, and by the other mysteries which Eleusis, the sanctuary of Attica, conceals in silence: succour, O succour the life of the wretched Psyche, thy suppliant! Suffer me, if for a few days only, to conceal myself in that heap of wheatsheaves, till the raging anger of the mighty goddess be mitigated by the lapse of time; or at least until my bodily powers, weakened by long-continued

labour, be renewed by an interval of rest."

"I am touched by your tears and entreaties," Ceres replied, "and fain would render you assistance; but I cannot provoke the displeasure of my relative, to whom I am also united by ties of friendship of old date, and who besides is a very worthy lady. Begone, therefore, from this temple directly, and be very thankful that I do not seize and detain you as a prisoner."

Psyche, thus repulsed, contrary to her expectations, and afflicted with twofold grief, retraced the way she came, and presently espied in a gloomy grove of the valley below the mountain a temple of exquisite structure. Unwilling to omit any chance of better fortune, though ever so remote, but resolving rather to implore the protection of the god, whoever he might be, she approached the sacred doors. There she beheld splendid offerings, and garments embroidered with golden letters, fastened to the branches of trees and to the door-posts of the temple, upon which was recorded the name of the goddess to whom they had been dedicated, and also the particulars of the favour received.

Then Psyche fell upon her knees, and with her hands embracing the yet warm altar, having first wiped away her tears, she thus offered up a prayer:

"O sister and consort of mighty Jove! be thou, Juno Sospita, a protectress to me in these my overwhelming misfortunes, and deliver me, worn out with long sufferings, from the fear of my impending danger; for I know that thou art accustomed readily to succour women in time of peril."

While Psyche thus prayed, Juno appeared before her, in all the august majesty of her divinity, and said:

"How readily would I lend an ear to your entreaties; but propriety will not permit me to act contrary to the wishes of Venus, my daughter-in-law, whom I have always loved as my own child. Then, besides, the laws forbid me to receive into my protection any fugitive servant, without the consent of her mistress."

Dismayed by this second shipwreck of her fortunes, and being no longer able to make search for her volatile husband, Psyche gave up all hopes of safety, and thus communed with herself:

"What other relief for my sorrows can now be looked for or procured, since even goddesses cannot, though willing, afford me any assistance? In what direction shall I once more bend my wandering steps, entangled, as I am, in snares so inextricable? Concealed in what habitations, in what darkness even, can I escape the ever-vigilant eyes of the mighty Venus? Assume, then, a masculine courage, my soul, boldly renounce vain hopes, voluntarily surrender yourself into the hands of your mistress, and try, though late, to soften her rage by submissive behaviour. Besides, who

knows whether you may not perhaps find in his mother's house him you have been so long seeking in vain."

Thus prepared for this doubtful experiment of duty, or rather for certain destruction, she considered with herself how she was to preface her entreaties.

Venus, meanwhile, declining to employ earthly means in pursuing her inquiries after Psyche, returned to heaven. She ordered the chariot to be got ready, which Vulcan had constructed with exquisite skill, and presented to her before the celebration of her marriage.

Then straightway went Venus to the royal citadel of Jove, and with a haughty air demanded, as especially necessary, the services of the crier god ; nor did the azure brow of Jupiter refuse its assent. Exulting Venus, accompanied by Mercury, immediately descended from heaven, and thus anxiously addressed him :

" My Arcadian brother, you well know that your sister, Venus, never did anything without the presence of Mercury, nor are you ignorant how long I have been unable to find my absconded female slave. Nothing remains, therefore, to be done but for you to proclaim her in public and announce a reward to him who shall find her. Take care, therefore, that my commands are speedily executed, and clearly describe the marks by which she may be recognised ; that no one may excuse himself on the plea of ignorance, if he incurs the crime of unlawfully concealing her."

So saying, she gave him a little book, in which were written Psyche's name and sundry particulars. This done, she immediately returned home. Nor did Mercury neglect her commands ; for going about among all nations, he thus performed his duties as crier :

" If any one can seize in her flight, and bring back, a fugitive daughter of a king, a handmaid of Venus, and by name Psyche, or discover where she has concealed herself, let such person repair to Mercury, and receive, by way of reward, for the discovery, seven sweet kisses from Venus herself, and one exquisitely delicious touch of her charming tongue."

Mercury having thus made proclamation, the desire of obtaining such a reward excited the emulous endeavours of all mankind, and this circumstance it was that quite put an end to all Psyche's hesitation. She was already near her mistress's gates, when she was met by one of the retinue of Venus, whose name was HABIT, and who immediately cried out, as loud as she could bawl :

" So, you most good-for-nothing wench, have you at last begun to discover that you have a mistress ? And do you pretend, too, in your abundant assurance, that you don't know what immense trouble we have had in endeavouring to find you out ? But it is well that you have fallen into my hands, of all others, and have got within the very jaws of Orcus, to receive, without delay, the penalty

of such obstinate contumacy."

So saying, she instantly twisted her hands in Psyche's hair, and dragged the unresisting captive along. But Venus, the moment she was dragged into her presence, burst into a loud laugh, such as people laugh who are furiously angry; and shaking her head and scratching her right ear:

"At length," said she, "have you deigned to pay your respects to your mother-in-law? Or rather, are you come to see your sick husband, who is yet dangerously ill from the wound you gave him? But make yourself easy; for I shall at once give you a reception such as a good mother-in-law ought to give. Where," she cried, "are those servants of mine, ANXIETY and SORROW?"

These attending, at her call, she delivered her to them to be tormented. Thereupon, in obedience to the commands of their mistress, they scourged and inflicted other torments on the wretched Psyche, and after they had tortured her, brought her back again into the presence of Venus.

"Just look at her," said Venus, again setting up a laugh; "her interesting state quite moves my compassion, since it is through that, forsooth, that she is to make me a happy grandmother. And the son of a vile handmaid is to hear himself called the grandson of Venus! And yet I talk nonsense in calling him my grandson; for ill-assorted marriages, contracted, too, in a country place, without any witnesses, and without the father's consent, cannot possibly be deemed legitimate; consequently this child will be a bastard, even if I do suffer you to bring it into the light at all."

Having thus said, she flew upon her, tore her clothes in a great many places, pulled out her hair, shook her by the head, and grievously maltreated her. Then taking wheat, barley, millet, poppy, vetches, lentils, and beans, and mixing them all together in one heap, she said to her:

"You seem to me, such an ugly slave as you now are, to be likely to gain lovers in no other way than by diligent drudgery. I will, therefore, myself, for once, make trial of your industrious habits. Take and separate this promiscuous mass of seeds, and having properly placed each grain in its place, and so sorted the whole, give me a proof of your expedition, by finishing the task before evening."

Then having delivered over to her the vast heap of seeds, she at once took her departure for a nuptial banquet.

But Psyche, astounded at the stupendous task, sat silent and stupefied, and did not move a hand to the confused and inextricable mass. •Just then, a tiny little ant, one of the inhabitants of the fields, became aware of this prodigious difficulty; and pitying the distress of the partner of the mighty god, and execrating the mother-

in-law's cruelty, it ran busily about, and summoned together the whole tribe of ants in the neighbourhood, crying to them :

" Take pity on her, ye active children of the all-producing earth ! Take pity, and make haste to help the wife of Love, a pretty damsel, who is now in a perilous situation."

Immediately the six-footed people came rushing in whole waves one upon another, and with the greatest diligence separated the whole heap, grain by grain ; then, having assorted the various kinds into different heaps, they vanished forthwith.

At nightfall, Venus returned home and saw with what marvellous expedition the task had been executed.

" This is no work of your hands, wicked creature," she said, " but his whom you have charmed, to your own sorrow and his " ; and throwing her a piece of coarse bread, she went to bed.

Meanwhile, Cupid was closely confined in his chamber, partly that he might not inflame his wound by froward indulgence, and partly lest he should associate with his beloved. The lovers, thus separated from each other under one roof, passed a miserable night. But as soon as Aurora had ushered in the morning, Venus called Psyche, and thus addressed her :

" Do you see yonder grove stretching along the margin of a river, whose deep eddies receive the waters of a neighbouring fountain ? There shining sheep of a golden colour wander about, feeding without a shepherd. I desire that you bring me immediately a flock of that precious wool, get it how you may."

Psyche willingly set out, not with any intention of executing this command, but to procure rest from her misfortunes, by hurling herself headlong from the rock into the river. But when she came to the brink, a green reed, the nurse of sweet music, divinely inspired by a gentle breath of air, thus prophetically murmured :

" Psyche ! exercised in mighty sorrows, neither pollute my sacred waters by your most miserable death, nor venture yet to approach the formidable sheep on the opposite bank. While heated by the burning radiance of the sun, they are transported with savage rage, and are the destruction of mortals, either by their sharp horns, their stony foreheads, or their venomous bites. Therefore until the sun has declined from the meridian, and the serene spirit of the flood has lulled the animals to rest, you may hide yourself under yonder lofty plane tree, which drinks of the same river with myself ; and as soon as the sheep have mitigated their fury, if you shake the branches of the neighbouring grove, you will find the woolly gold everywhere sticking to them."

Thus the artless and humane reed taught the wretched Psyche how to accomplish this dangerous enterprise with safety.

Psyche, therefore, observing all the directions, found her obedience

was not in vain, but returned to Venus with her bosom full of the delicate golden fleece. Yet she was not able to win the approbation of her mistress by this her second perilous labour. But Venus, smiling bitterly with knitted brows, thus addressed her :

" I do not fail to perceive another's hand in the performance of this task also ; but I will now try whether you are endowed with a courageous mind and singular prudence. Do you see the summit of yonder lofty mountain ? From that peak fall the dusky waters of a black fountain, which, after being confined in the neighbouring valley, irrigate the Stygian marshes, and supply the hoarse streams of Cocytus ? Bring me immediately in this little urn ice-cold water drawn from the very midst of the lofty fountain."

Thus speaking, she gave her a vessel of polished crystal, and at the same time threatened her more severely than before.

But Psyche started off with the utmost celerity to reach the very summit of the mountain, presuming that there, at least, she would find the period of her most miserable life. However, when she arrived at its confines, she saw the deadly difficulty of the stupendous undertaking. For a rock, enormously lofty and inaccessibly rugged, vomits from its middle the horrid waters of the fountain, which, immediately falling headlong, are carried unseen through a deep, narrow, and covered channel into the neighbouring valley. On the right and left hand they creep through hollow rocks, over which fierce dragons stretch out their long necks, and keep a perpetual watch with unwinking vigilance. And the vocal waters exclaim ever and anon as they roll along :

" Begone ; what are you about ? Mind what you do ; take care ; fly ; you will perish."

Psyche, therefore, petrified through the impossibility of accomplishing the task, and being perfectly overwhelmed by the danger before her, was even deprived of the benefit of tears, the last solace of the wretched. But the sorrow of the innocent soul is not concealed from the penetrating eyes of Providence. The rapacious eagle, Jove's royal bird, on a sudden flew to her with expanded wings, remembering his ancient obligations to Cupid, who enabled him to carry the Phrygian cup-bearer up to Jove ; therefore, in gratitude to the young god, the eagle deserted the lofty paths of Jupiter, and bringing seasonable assistance to Cupid's wife in her distress, he thus addressed her :

" Can you, simple as you are, and inexperienced in attempts of this kind, ever hope to steal one drop of this most holy and no less terrible fountain ? Have you not heard, at least, that these Stygian waters are formidable even to Jupiter himself, and that as you swear by the divinity of the gods, so they are accustomed to swear by the majesty of Styx ? But give me that little urn."

Snatching it in haste, he sailed away on his strong wings, steering his course to the right and to the left, between the rows of raging teeth, and the three-forked vibrating tongues of the dragons until he reached and drew the reluctant waters, which warned him to begone while he might in safety. But he pretended that Venus herself wanted some of the water, and had ordered him to procure it ; and on this account his access to the fountain was somewhat facilitated.

Psyche, therefore, joyfully receiving the full urn, returned with all speed to Venus. Yet not even by the accomplishment of this dangerous enterprise could she appease the anger of the raging goddess. For designing to expose her to still more outrageous trials, Venus thus addressed her, a smile, the harbinger of ruin, accompanying her words :

" You appear to me to be a profound and malevolent sorceress, or you never could with so much dexterity have performed my commands ; but there is one task more, my dear, which you must perform. Take this box," she said, delivering it to her, " and direct your course to the infernal regions and the deadly palace of Pluto. Then, presenting the box to Proserpine, say, Venus requests you to send her a small portion of your beauty, at least as much as may be sufficient for one short day ; for she has consumed all the beauty she possessed, through the attention which she pays to her sick son. But return with the utmost expedition ; for I must adorn myself with this beauty of Proserpine before I go to the theatre of the gods."

Psyche was now truly sensible that she was arrived at the extremity of her evil fortune ; and clearly perceived that she was openly and undisguisedly impelled to immediate destruction, since she was forced to direct her steps to Tartarus and the shades below. Without any further delay, therefore, she proceeded towards a lofty tower, that she might thence hurl herself headlong ; for she considered that she should thus descend by a straight and easy road to the infernal regions. But she was no sooner arrived there, than the tower suddenly addressed her in the following words :

" Why, O miserable creature, dost thou seek to destroy thyself by falling headlong hence ? And why dost thou rashly sink under this thy last danger and endurance ? For as soon as thy breath shall thus be separated from thy body, thou wilt indeed descend to profound Tartarus, but canst not by any means return thence. Listen, therefore, to me. Lacedaemon, a noble city of Achaia, is not far from hence. Near this city, concealed in devious places, is Tenarus, which you must seek ; for there you will find a cavity, which is Pluto's breathing hole, and an untraversed road presents itself to the view through the yawning gap. As soon as you have passed the threshold of this cavity, you will proceed in a direct path to the palace of Pluto,

You ought not, however, to pass through those shades with empty hands, but should take a sop of barley bread, soaked in hydromel, in each hand, and in your mouth two pieces of money. And when you have accomplished a good part of your deadly journey, you will meet a lame ass laden with wood, with a driver as lame as himself, who will ask you to reach him certain cords to fasten the burden which has fallen from the ass : but be careful that you pass by him in silence. Then, without any delay, proceed till you arrive at the dead river, where Charon, immediately demanding his fee, ferries the passengers over in his patched boat to the farthest shore.

"Avarice, it appears, lives among the dead ; nor does Charon himself, not the father Pluto, though so great a god, do anything gratuitously. To this squalid old man give one of the pieces of money which you carry with you ; yet in such a manner, that he may take it with his own hand from your mouth. While you are passing over the sluggish river, a certain dead old man, floating on its surface, and raising his putrid hand, will entreat you to take him into the boat. Beware, however, of yielding to any impulse of unlawful pity. Having passed over the river, and proceeded to a little distance beyond it, you will see certain old women, weaving a web, who will request you to lend them a helping hand ; but it is not lawful for you to touch the web. For all these, and many other particulars, are snares prepared for you by Venus, that you may drop one of the sops out of your hands. But do not suppose that this would be a trifling loss ; since the want of only one of these sops would prevent your return to light. For a huge dog, with three large, fierce, and formidable necks and heads, barking with his thundering jaws, terrifies in vain the dead, whom he cannot injure ; and always watching before the threshold and black palace of Proserpine, guards the void Plutonian mansion.

"Having appeased this dog with one of your sops, you may easily pass by him, and then you will immediately enter the presence of Proserpine herself, who will receive you in a very courteous and benignant manner, desire you to repose on a soft seat, and persuade you to partake of a sumptuous banquet. But seat yourself on the ground, ask for a piece of common bread, and eat it ; then deliver your message, and having received what you came for, bribe the cruel dog with the remaining sop. Afterwards, having given to the avaricious ferryman the piece of money which you have reserved, and having passed his river, you will return by the way you came to the choir of the celestial stars. But, above all things, I warn you, be particularly cautious not to open or look on the box which you carry, or explore that concealed treasury of divine beauty."

In this manner, the propitious tower delivered its prophetic admonitions.

Psyche, therefore, without delay, proceeded to Tenarus, and duly taking her pieces of money and her sops, ran down the infernal avenue. Here, having passed by the lame ass in silence, given the ferryman his fee, neglected the entreaties of the floating corpse, despised the fraudulent prayers of the spinsters, and lulled the rage of the horrid dog with a sop, she entered the palace of Proserpine. Nor did she accept the delicate seat, or delicious banquet ; but humbly sat at the feet of Proserpine, and, contented with a piece of common bread, delivered her embassy from Venus. Immediately after this, she received the box secretly filled and shut ; and having stopped the barking mouth of the dog with the remaining sop, and given the ferryman the other piece of money, she returned from the infernal regions much more vigorous than before.

Having again beheld and adored the fair light of day, though she was in haste to finish her errand, she was seized with a rash curiosity :

" Behold," said she, " what a foolish bearer am I of divine beauty, who do not even take the least portion of it, that I may by this means appear pleasing in the eyes of my beautiful lover."

As she ended this soliloquy, she opened the box ; but it contained no beauty, nor indeed anything but an infernal and truly Stygian sleep, which, being freed from its confinement, immediately seizes her, suffuses all her members with a dense cloud of somnolence, and holds her prostrate on the very spot where she opened the box ; so that she lay motionless, and nothing else than a sleeping corpse.

But Cupid, being now recovered of his wound, and unable to endure the long absence of his Psyche, glided through the narrow window of the bedchamber in which he was confined. His wings, invigorated by repose, flew far more swiftly than before ; he hastened to his Psyche, and carefully brushing off the cloud of sleep and shutting it up again in its old receptacle, the box, he roused Psyche with an innocuous touch of one of his arrows.

" Behold," said he, " unhappy girl, again you have all but perished, a victim to curiosity. Now, however, strenuously perform the task imposed upon you by my mother, and I myself will take care of the rest."

Having thus spoken, the lover soared aloft on his wings, and Psyche immediately carried the present of Proserpine to Venus.

In the meantime, Cupid, wasting away through excess of love, and dreading his mother's sudden prudery, betakes himself to his usual weapons of craft, and having with rapid wings penetrated the summit of heaven, supplicates the mighty Jupiter, and defends his cause. Then Jupiter, stroking the little cheeks of Cupid, and kissing his hand, thus addressed him :

" Though you, my masterful son, never pay me that reverence which has been decreed me by the synod of the gods, but perpetu-

CUPID AND PSYCHE

ally wound this breast of mine, nevertheless, remembering my moderation, and that you have been nursed in these hands of mine will accomplish all that you desire."

Having thus spoken, he ordered Mercury immediately to summon an assembly of all the gods ; and at the same time to proclaim, that if any one of the celestials absented himself he should be fined ten thousand pieces of money. The fear of such a penalty caused the celestial theatre to be filled immediately ; whereupon lofty Jupiter, sitting on his sublime throne, thus addressed the assembly :

" Ye conscript gods, whose names are registered in the white roll of the Muses, you are all well acquainted with that youth whom I have reared with my own hands, and the impetuous fire of whose juvenile years I deem it necessary to restrain by some bridle or other. He has made choice of a girl. Let him, therefore, hold her, let him possess her, and embracing Psyche, always enjoy the object of his love."

Then turning his face to Venus, " Nor do you, my daughter," said he, " be sorrowful on this occasion, nor fearful that your pedigree and rank will be disgraced by a mortal marriage ; for I will now cause the nuptials not to be unequal, but legitimate, and agreeable to the civil law."

Immediately after this, he ordered Mercury to bring Psyche to heaven ; and as soon as she arrived, extending to her a cup of ambrosia :

" Take this," said he, " Psyche, and be immortal ; nor shall Cupid ever depart from your embrace, but these nuptials of yours shall be perpetual."

Then, without delay, a sumptuous wedding supper was served up. The husband, reclining at the upper end of the table, embraced Psyche in his bosom ; in like manner, Jupiter was seated with Juno, and after them, the other gods and goddesses in their proper order. Thus Psyche came lawfully into the hands of Cupid ; and at length a daughter was born to them, whom we call PLEASURE.

HELIODORUS

400 A.D.

TRAGIC LOVE

THE STORY TOLD BY CNEMON

My father's name was Aristippus, an Athenian, a member of the Upper Council, and possessed of a decent fortune. After the death of my mother, as he had no child but me, he began to think of a second marriage, esteeming it hard that he should live an unsettled life solely on my account; he married, therefore, a woman of polished manners, but a mischief-maker, called Demaeneta.

From the moment of her marriage she brought him entirely under her subjection, enticing him by her beauty and seeming attentions; for there never was a woman who possessed the arts of allurements in a greater degree: she would lament at his going out, run with joy to meet him at his return, blame him for his stay, and mingle kisses and embraces with the tenderest expostulations. My father, entangled in these wiles, was entirely wrapped up in her. At first she pretended to behave to me as if I had been her own son; this likewise helped to influence my father. She would sometimes kiss me, and constantly wished to enjoy my society. I readily complied, suspecting nothing, but was agreeably surprised at her behaving to me with so much maternal affection.

When, however, she approached me with more wantonness; when her kisses became warmer than those of a relation ought to be, and her glances betrayed marks of passion, I began to entertain suspicions, to avoid her company, and repress her caresses. I need not enumerate what artifices she used, what promises she employed to gain me over, how she called me darling, sweetest, breath of her life; how she mingled blandishments with these soft words; how, in serious affairs, she behaved really as a mother, in less grave hours but too plainly as a lover.

At length, one evening, after I had been assisting at the solemn Panathenæan festival (when a ship is sent to Minerva by land), and had joined in the hymns and usual procession, I returned home in my dress of ceremony, with my robe and crown. She, as soon as she saw

me, ran up to me, embraced me, and called me her dear Theseus, her young Hippolytus : How do you imagine I then felt, who now blush even at the recital ?

My father that night was to sup in the Prytanaeum, and, as it was a grand and stated entertainment, was not expected to return home till the next day. I had not long retired to my apartment when she followed me ; but when she found that I resisted with horror, regardless of her allurements, her promises, or her threats, fetching a deep-drawn sigh, she retired ; and the very next day, with uncommon wickedness, began to put her machinations in force against me.

She took to her bed ; and, when my father returned and inquired the reason of it, she said she was indisposed, and at first would say no more. But when he insisted, with great tenderness, on knowing what had so disordered her, with seeming reluctance she thus addressed him :

“ This dainty youth, this son of yours, whom I call the gods to witness I loved as much as you could do yourself, taking the opportunity of your absence, while I was advising and exhorting him to temperance, and to avoid drunkenness and loose companions (for I was not ignorant of his inclinations, though I avoided dropping the least hint of them to you, lest it should appear the calumny of a step-mother)—while, I say, I took this opportunity of speaking to him alone, that I might spare his confusion, I am ashamed to tell how he abused both you and me ; nor did he confine himself to words ; but assailing me both with hands and feet, kicked me at last upon the stomach, and left me in a dreadful condition, in which I have continued ever since.”

When my father heard this, he made no reply, asked no questions, framed no excuse for me ; but, believing that she who had appeared so fond of me, would not, without great reason, accuse me, the next time he met me in the house he gave me a tremendous blow ; and calling his slaves, he commanded them to scourge me, without so much as telling me the cause of it. When he had wreaked his resentment, “ Now, at least,” said I, “ father, tell me the reason of this shameful treatment.”

This enraged him the more. “ What hypocrisy ! ” cried he ; “ he wants me to repeat the story of his own wickedness.” And, turning from me, he hastened to Demaeneta. But this implacable woman, not yet satisfied, laid another plot against me.

She had a young slave called Thisbe, handsome enough, and skilled in music. She, by her mistress's orders, put herself in my way ; and though she had before appeared hostile to me, she now made advances, in gestures, words, and behaviour. I, like any fellow as I was, began to be vain of my own attractions ; and, in

short, made an appointment with her one night.

When, one day, as I was cautioning her to have a care lest her mistress found us out, she broke out :

" O Cnemon ! how great is your simplicity, if you think it dangerous for a slave like me to be discovered with you. What would you think this very mistress deserves, who, calling herself of an honourable family, having a lawful husband, and knowing death to be the punishment of her crime, yet entertains a lover ? "

" Be silent," I replied ; " I cannot give credit to what you say."

" What if I show you the lover in the very fact ? "

" If you can, do."

" Most willingly will I," says she, " both on your account, who have been so abused by her, and on my own, who am the daily victim of her jealousy. If you are a man, therefore, seize her paramour."

I promised I would, and she then left me.

The third night after this she awakened me from sleep, and told me that the intruder was in the house ; that my father, on some sudden occasion, was gone into the country, and that the lover had taken this opportunity of secretly visiting Demaeneta. Now was the time for me to punish him as he deserved ; and that I should go in, sword in hand, lest he should escape.

I did as Thisbe exhorted me ; and taking my sword, she going before me with a torch, went towards my mother's chamber. When I arrived there, and perceived there was a light burning within, my passion rising, I burst open the door, and, rushing in, cried out, " Where is the villain, the vile paramour of this paragon of virtue ? " and thus exclaiming, I advanced, prepared to transfix them both, when my father, O ye gods ! leaping from the couch, fell at my feet and besought me, " O my son ! stay your hand, pity your father, and these grey hairs which have nourished you. I have used you ill, I confess, but not so as to deserve death from you. Let not passion transport you ; do not imbrue your hands in a parent's blood ! "

He was going on in this supplicatory strain, while I stood thunder-struck, without power either to speak or stir. I looked about for Thisbe, but she had withdrawn. I cast my eyes in amaze round the chamber, confounded and stupefied ; the sword fell from my hand.

Demaeneta, running up, immediately took it away ; and my father, now seeing himself out of danger, laid hands upon me, and ordered me to be bound, his wife stimulating him all the time, and exclaiming, " This is what I foretold ; I bade you guard yourself from the attempts of this youth ; I observed his looks and feared his designs."

" You did," he replied, " but I could not have imagined he would carry his wickedness to such a pitch."

He then kept me bound ; and though I made several attempts to

explain the matter, he would not suffer me to speak.

When the morning was come, he brought me out before the people, bound as I was ; and flinging dust upon his head, thus addressed them : " I entertained hopes, O Athenians, when the gods gave me this son, that he would have been the staff of my declining age. I brought him up genteelly ; I gave him a good education ; I went through every step needful to procure him the full privileges of a citizen of Athens ; in short, my whole life was a scene of solicitude on his account. But he, forgetting all this, abused me first with words, and assaulted my wife with blows ; and at last broke in upon me in the night, brandishing a drawn sword, and was prevented from committing parricide only by a sudden consternation which seized him, and made the weapon drop from his hand. I have recourse, therefore, to this assembly for my own defence and his punishment. I might, I know, lawfully have punished him even with death myself ; but I had rather leave the whole matter to your judgment than stain my own hands with his blood " : and, having said this, he began to weep.

Demaeneta too accompanied him with her tears, lamenting the untimely but just death which I must soon suffer, whom my evil genius had armed against my parent ; and thus seeming to confirm by her lamentations the truth of her husband's accusations.

At length I desired to be heard in my turn, when the clerk, arising, put this pointed question to me : Did I attack my father with a sword ?

When I replied, " I did indeed attack him, but hear how I came so to do "—the whole assembly exclaimed that, after this confession, there was no room for apology or defence.

Some cried out I ought to be stoned ; others, that I should be delivered to the executioner, and thrown headlong into the Barathrum.

During this tumult, while they were disputing about my punishment, I cried out, " All this I suffer on account of my step-mother, who makes me to be condemned unheard."

A few of the assembly appeared to take notice of what I said, and to have some suspicions of the truth of the case ; yet even then I could not obtain an audience, so much were all minds possessed by the disturbance.

At length they proceeded to ballot : one thousand seven hundred condemned me to death ; some to be stoned, others to be thrown into the Barathrum. The remainder, to the number of about a thousand, having some suspicions of the machinations of my step-mother, adjudged me to perpetual banishment ; and this sentence prevailed : for though a greater number had doomed me to death, yet there being a difference in their opinions as to the kind of death,

they were so divided that the numbers of neither party amounted to a thousand.

Thus, therefore, was I driven from my father's house and my country; the wicked Demaeneta, however, did not remain unpunished; in what manner you shall hear by and by.

I went immediately from the assembly to the Piræus, and finding a ship ready to set sail for Aegina, I embarked in her, hearing there were some relations of my mother's there. I was fortunate enough to find them on my arrival, and passed the first days of my exile agreeably enough among them. After I had been there about three weeks, taking my accustomed solitary walk, I came down to the port; a vessel was standing in; I stopped to see from whence she came, and who were on board. The ladder was no sooner let down, when a person leapt on shore, ran up to me, and embraced me. He proved to be Charias, one of my former companions.

"O Cnemon!" he cried out, "I bring you good news. You are revenged on your enemy: Demaeneta is dead."

"I am heartily glad to see you, Charias," I replied; "but why do you hurry over your good tidings as if they were bad ones? Tell me how all this has happened; I fear she has died a natural death, and escaped that which she deserved."

"Justice," said he, "has not entirely deserted us; and though she sometimes seems to wink at crime for a time, protecting her vengeance, such wretches rarely escape at last: neither has Demaeneta. From my connection with Thisbe, I have been made acquainted with the whole affair.

"After your unjust exile, your father, repenting of what he had done, retired from sight of the world into a lonely villa, and there lived—'gnawing his own heart,' according to the poet. But the furies took possession of his wife, and her passion rose to a higher pitch in your absence than it had ever done before. She lamented your misfortunes and her own, calling day and night in a frantic manner upon Cnemon, her dear boy, her soul; insomuch that the women of her acquaintance, who visited her, wondered at and praised her; that, though a step-dame, she felt a mother's affection. They endeavoured to console and strengthen her; but she replied that her sorrows were past consolation, and that they were ignorant of the wound which rankled at her heart.

"When she was alone she abused Thisbe for the share she had in the business. 'How slow were you in assisting my love! How ready in administering to my revenge! You deprived me of him I loved above all the world, without giving me an instant to repent and be appeased.' And she gave plain hints that she intended some mischief against her.

"Thisbe, seeing her disappointed, enraged, almost out of her

senses with love and grief, and capable of undertaking anything, determined to be beforehand with her ; and, by laying a snare for her mistress, to provide for her own security. One day, therefore, she thus accosted her :

“ ‘ Why, O my mistress, do you wrongfully accuse your slave ? It has always been my study to obey your will in the best manner I could ; if anything unlucky has happened, fortune is to blame ; I am ready now, if you command me, to endeavour to find a remedy for your distress.’ ”

“ ‘ What remedy can you find ? ’ cried she. ‘ He who alone could ease my torments is far distant ; the unexpected lenity of his judges has been my ruin : had he been stoned or otherwise put to death, my hopes and cares would have been buried with him. Impossibility of gratification extinguishes desire, and despair makes the heart callous. But now I seem to have him before my eyes : I hear, and blush at hearing, him upbraid me with his injuries. Sometimes I flatter my fond heart that he will return again, and that I shall obtain my wishes ; at other times I form schemes of seeking him myself, on whatever shore he wanders. These thoughts agitate, inflame, and drive me beside myself. Ye gods ! I am justly served. Why, instead of laying schemes against his life, did I not persist in endeavouring to subdue him by kindness ? He refused me at first, and it was but fitting he should do so ; I was a stranger, and he revered his father’s honour. Time and persuasion might have overcome his coldness ; but I, unjust and inhuman as I was, more like a tyrant than his lover, cruelly punished his first disobedience. Yet with how much justice might he slight Demænetæ, whom he so infinitely surpassed in beauty ! But, my dear Thisbe, what remedy is it you hint at ? ’ ”

“ The artful slave replied : ‘ O mistress, Cnemon, as most people think, in obedience to the sentence, has departed both from the city and from Attica ; but I, who inquire anxiously into everything that you can have any concern in, have discovered that he is lurking somewhere about the town. You have heard perhaps of Arsinoë the singer : he has long been connected with her. After his misfortune, she promised to go into exile with him, and keeps him concealed at her house till she can prepare herself for setting out.’ ”

“ ‘ Happy Arsinoë ! ’ cried Demænetæ ; ‘ happy at first in possessing the love of Cnemon, and now in being permitted to accompany him into banishment. But what is all this to me ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Attend, and you shall hear,’ said Thisbe. ‘ I will pretend that I am in love with Cnemon. I will beg Arsinoë, with whom I am acquainted, to introduce me some night to him in her room ; you may, if you please, represent Arsinoë, and receive his visit instead of me. I will take care that he shall have drunk a little freely.’ ”

"Demaeneta eagerly embraced the proposal, and desired her to put it into immediate execution. Thisbe demanded a day only for preparation ; and going directly to Arsinoë, asked her if she knew Teledemus. Arsinoë replying that she did, 'Receive us then,' says she, 'this evening into your house ; I have promised to meet him to-night : he will come first ; I shall follow, when I have put my mistress to bed.'

"Then hastening into the country to Aristippus, she thus addressed him : 'I come, master, to accuse myself ; punish me as you think fit. I have been the cause of your losing your son ; not indeed willingly, but yet I was instrumental in his destruction : for when I perceived that my mistress led a dishonourable life, I began to fear for myself, lest I should suffer if she should be detected by anybody else. I pitied you too, who received such ill returns for all your affection ; I was afraid, however, of mentioning the matter to you, but I discovered it to my young master ; and coming to him by night, to avoid observation, I told him that my mistress had a lover. He, hurried on by resentment, mistook my meaning, and thought I said that the lover was then with her. His passion rose ; he snatched a sword, and ran madly on towards her chamber. The rest you know. You have it in your power at least to clear the character of your banished son, and to punish her who has injured both of you ; for I will show you to-day Demaeneta with her paramour, in a strange house without the city.'

"'If you can do that,' said Aristippus, 'your freedom shall be your reward. I shall, perhaps, take some comfort in life when I have got rid of this wicked woman. I have for some time been uneasy within myself : I have suspected her ; but, having no proofs, I was silent. But what must we do now ?'

"'You know,' said she, 'the garden where is the monument of the Epicureans : come there in the evening, and wait for me.'

"And having so said, away she goes ; and coming to Demaeneta, 'Dress yourself,' she cries, 'immediately ; neglect nothing that can set off your person ; everything that I have promised you is ready.'

"Demaeneta did as she was desired, and adorned herself with all her skill ; and in the evening Thisbe attended her to the place of assignation. When they came near she desired her to stop a little ; and going forwards she begged Arsinoë to step into the next house, and leave her at liberty in her own ; for she wished to spare the young man's blushes, who was but lately initiated into love affairs ; and, having persuaded her, she returned, introduced Demaeneta, and took away the light (lest, forsooth, you, who were then safe at Aegina, should discover her).

"'I will now go,' said she, 'and bring the youth to you ; he is drinking at a house in the neighbourhood.'

"Away she flies where Aristippus was waiting, and exhorts him to go immediately and bind the villain fast. He follows her, rushes into the house, and, by help of a little moonlight which shone, with difficulty finding Demaeneta, exclaims, 'I have caught you now, you abandoned creature!'

"Thisbe immediately upon this exclamation bangs to the door on the other side, and cries out, 'What untoward fortune! the paramour has escaped; but take care at least that you secure the other.'

"'Make yourself easy,' he replied; 'I have secured this wicked woman, whom I was the most desirous of taking'; and seizing her, he began to drag her towards the city.

"But she, feeling deeply the situation she was in, the disappointment of her hopes, the ignominy which must attend her offences, and the punishment which awaited them, vexed and enraged at being deceived and detected, when she came near the pit which is in the Academy (you know the place where our generals sacrifice to the Manes of our heroes), suddenly disengaging herself from the hands of the old man, flung herself headlong in: and thus she died a wretched death, suited for a wretch like herself.

"Upon this Aristippus cried out, 'You have yourself anticipated the justice of the laws,' and the next day he laid the whole matter before the people; and having with difficulty obtained his pardon, consulted his friends and acquaintance how best he could obtain your recall. What success he has met with I cannot inform you of; for I have been obliged, as you see, to sail here on my own private business. But I think you have the greatest reason to expect that the people will consent to your return, and that your father will himself come to seek you, and conduct you home."

Here Charias ended his recital.

How came I to this place, and what have been my fortunes since, would take up more time and words than there is at present opportunity for.

HEBREW LITERATURE

circa 200 B.C.

TOBIT

THE book of the words of Tobit, son of Tobiel, the son of Ananiel, the son of Aduel, the son of Gabael, of the seed of Asael, of the tribe of Naphtali ; who in the time of Enemessar King of the Assyrians was led captive out of Thisbe, which is at the right hand of Kadesh Naphtali in Galilee above Aser.

I Tobit have walked all the days of my life in the way of truth and justice, and I did many almsdeeds to my brethren, and my nation, who came with me to Nineve, into the land of the Assyrians. And when I was in mine own country, in the land of Israel, being but young, all the tribe of Naphtali my father fell from the house of Jerusalem, which was chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, that all the tribes should sacrifice there, where the temple of the habitation of the Most High was consecrated and built for all ages. Now all the tribes which together revolted, and the house of my father Naphtali, sacrificed unto the heifer Baal. But I alone went often to Jerusalem at the feasts, as it was ordained unto all the people of Israel by an everlasting decree, having the first fruits and tenths of increase, with that which was first shorn ; and them gave I at the altar to the priests the children of Aaron. The first tenth part of all increase I gave to the sons of Aaron, who ministered at Jerusalem : another tenth part I sold away, and went, and spent it every year at Jerusalem : and the third I gave unto them to whom it was meet, as Debora my father's mother had commanded me, because I was left an orphan by my father.

Furthermore, when I was come to the age of a man, I married Anna of mine own kindred, and of her I begat Tobias.

And when we were carried away captives to Nineve, all my brethren and those that were of my kindred did eat of the bread of the Gentiles. But I kept myself from eating ; because I remembered God with all my heart. And the Most High gave me grace and favour before Enemessar, so that I was his purveyor. And I went into Mediâ, and left in trust with Gabael, the brother of Gabrias, at Rages a city of Media ten talents of silver.

Now when Enemessar was dead, Sennacherib his son reigned in his stead ; and in his time the highways were troubled, that I could not go into Media. And in the time of Enemessar I gave many alms to my brethren, and gave my bread to the hungry, and my clothes to the naked : and if I saw any of my nation dead, or cast about the walls of Nineve, I buried him. And if the King Sennacherib had slain any, when he was come, and fled from Judea, I buried them privily ; for in his wrath he killed many ; but the bodies were not found, when they were sought for of the King. And when one of the Ninevites went and complained of me to the King, that I buried them, and hid myself ; understanding that I was sought for to be put to death, I withdrew myself for fear. Then all my goods were forcibly taken away, neither was there anything left me, beside my wife Anna and my son Tobias. And there passed not five and fifty days, before two of his sons killed him, and they fled into the mountains of Ararath ; and Sarchedonus his son reigned in his stead ; who appointed over his father's accounts, and over all his affairs, Achiacharus my brother Anael's son. And Achiacharus intreating for me, I returned to Nineve. Now Achiacharus was cupbearer, and keeper of the signet, and steward, and overseer of the accounts : and Sarchedonus appointed him next unto him : and he was my brother's son.

Now when I was come home again, and my wife Anna was restored unto me, with my son Tobias, in the feast of Pentecost, which is the holy feast of the seven weeks, there was a good dinner prepared me, in the which I sat down to eat. And when I saw abundance of meat, I said to my son, " Go and bring what poor man soever thou shalt find out of our brethren, who is mindful of the Lord ; and, lo, I tarry for thee." But he came again, and said : " Father, one of our nation is strangled, and is cast out in the market-place." Then before I had tasted of any meat, I started up, and took him up into a room until the going down of the sun. Then I returned, and washed myself, and ate my meat in heaviness, remembering that prophecy of Amos, as he said, Your feasts shall be turned into mourning, and all your mirth into lamentation. Therefore I wept : and after the going down of the sun I went and made a grave, and buried him. But my neighbours mocked me, and said : " This man is not yet afraid to be put to death for this matter : who fled away ; and yet, lo, he burieth the dead again." The same night also I returned from the burial, and slept by the wall of my courtyard, being polluted, and my face was uncovered : and I knew not that there were sparrows in the wall, and mine eyes being open, the sparrows muted warm dung into mine eyes, and a whiteness came in mine eyes ; and I went to the physicians, but they helped me not : moreover Achiacharus did nourish me, until I went into Elymais.

And my wife Anna did take women's works to do. And when she had sent them home to the owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid. And when it was in my house, and began to cry, I said unto her : " From whence is this kid ? is it not stolen ? render it to the owners ; for it is not lawful to eat anything that is stolen." But she replied upon me : " It was given for a gift more than the wages." Howbeit I did not believe her, but bade her render it to the owners : and I was abashed at her. But she replied upon me : " Where are thine alms and thy righteous deeds ? behold, thou and all thy works are known."

Then I being grieved did weep, and in my sorrow prayed, saying : " O Lord, Thou art just, and all Thy works and all Thy ways are mercy and truth, and Thou judgest truly and justly for ever. Remember me, and look on me, punish me not for my sins and ignorances, and the sins of my fathers, who have sinned before Thee : for they obeyed not Thy commandments : wherefore Thou hast delivered us for a spoil, and unto captivity, and unto death, and for a proverb of reproach to all the nations among whom we are dispersed. And now Thy judgments are many and true : deal with me according to my sins and my fathers' : because we have not kept Thy commandments, neither have walked in truth before Thee. Now therefore deal with me as seemeth best unto Thee, and command my spirit to be taken from me, that I may be dissolved, and become earth : for it is profitable for me to die rather than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and have much sorrow : command therefore that I may now be delivered out of this distress, and go into the everlasting place : turn not Thy face away from me."

It came to pass the same day, that in Ecbatane, a city of Media, Sara the daughter of Raguel was also reproached by her father's maids ; because that she had been married to seven husbands, whom Asmodeus the evil spirit had killed, before they had lain with her. " Dost thou not know," said they, " that thou hast strangled thine husbands ? thou hast had already seven husbands, neither wast thou named after any of them. Wherefore dost thou beat us for them ? if they be dead, go thy ways after them, let us never see of thee either son or daughter."

When she heard these things, she was very sorrowful, so that she thought to have strangled herself ; and she said : " I am the only daughter of my father, and if I do this, it shall be a reproach unto him, and I shall bring his old age with sorrow unto the grave." Then she prayed toward the window, and said : " Blessed art Thou, O Lord my God, and Thine holy and glorious name is blessed and honourable for ever : let all Thy works praise Thee for ever. And now, O Lord, I set mine eyes and my face toward Thee, and say, Take me out of the earth, that I may hear no more the reproach.

Thou knowest, Lord, that I am pure from all sin with man, and that I never polluted my name, nor the name of my father, in the land of my captivity : I am the only daughter of my father, neither hath he any child to be his heir, neither any near kinsman, nor any son of his alive, to whom I may keep myself for a wife : my seven husbands are already dead ; and why should I live ? but if it please not Thee that I should die, command some regard to be had of me, and pity taken of me, that I hear no more reproach."

"So the prayers of them both were heard before the majesty of the great God. And Raphael was sent to heal them both, that is, to scale away the whiteness of Tobit's eyes, and to give Sara the daughter of Raguel for a wife to Tobias the son of Tobit ; and to bind Asmodeus the evil spirit ; because she belonged to Tobias by right of inheritance. The selfsame time came Tobit home, and entered into his house, and Sara the daughter of Raguel came down from her upper chamber.

In that day Tobit remembered the money which he had committed to Gabael in Rages of Media, and said with himself : " I have wished for death ; wherefore do I not call for my son Tobias, that I may signify to him of the money before I die ? "

And when he had called him, he said : " My son, when I am dead, bury me ; and despise not thy mother, but honour her all the days of thy life, and do that which shall please her, and grieve her not. Remember, my son, that she saw many dangers for thee, when thou wast in her womb ; and when she is dead, bury her by me in one grave. My son, be mindful of the Lord our God all thy days, and let not thy will be set to sin, or to transgress His commandments : do uprightly all thy life long, and follow not the ways of unrighteousness. For if thou deal truly, thy doings shall prosperously succeed to thee, and to all them that live justly. Give alms of thy substance ; and when thou givest alms, let not thine eye be envious, neither turn thy face from any poor, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee. If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly : if thou have but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little : for thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity. Because that alms do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness. For alms is a good gift unto all that give it in the sight of the Most High. Beware of all whoredom, my son, and chiefly take a wife of the seed of thy fathers, and take not a strange woman to wife, which is not of thy father's tribe : for we are the children of the prophets, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : remember, my son, that our fathers from the beginning, even that they all married wives of their own kindred, and were blessed in their children, and their seed shall inherit the land. Now therefore, my son, love thy brethren, and despise not in thy heart thy brethren,

the sons and daughters of thy people, in not taking a wife of them : for in pride is destruction and much trouble, and in lewdness is decay and great want : for lewdness is the mother of famine. Let not the wages of any man, which hath wrought for thee, tarry with thee, but give him it out of hand : for if thou serve God, He will also repay thee ; be circumspect, my son, in all things thou doest, and be wise in all thy conversation. Do that to no man which thou hatest : drink not wine to make thee drunken : neither let drunkenness go with thee in thy journey. Give of thy bread to the hungry, and of thy garments to them that are naked ; and according to thine abundance give alms ; and let not thine eye be envious, when thou givest alms. Pour out thy bread on the burial of the just, but give nothing to the wicked. Ask counsel of all that are wise, and despise not any counsel that is profitable. Bless the Lord thy God **always**, and desire of Him that thy ways may be directed, and that all thy paths and counsels may prosper : for every nation hath not counsel ; but the Lord Himself giveth all good things, and He humbleth whom He will, as He will ; now therefore, my son, remember my commandments, neither let them be put out of thy mind. And now I signify this to thee, that I committed ten talents to Gabael the son of Gabrias at Rages in Media. And fear not, my son, that we are made poor : for thou hast much wealth, if thou fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is pleasing in His sight."

Tobias then answered and said : " Father, I will do all things which thou hast commanded me : but how can I receive the money, seeing I know him not ? " Then he gave him the handwriting, and said unto him : " Seek thee a man which may go with thee, whiles I yet live, and I will give him wages : and go and receive the money." Therefore when he went to seek a man, he found Raphael that was an angel. But he knew not ; and he said unto him : " Canst thou go with me to Rages ? and knowest thou those places well ? " To whom the angel said : " I will go with thee, and I know the way well : for I have lodged with our brother Gabael." Then Tobias said unto him : " Tarry for me, till I tell my father." Then he said unto him : " Go, and tarry not." So he went in and said to his father : " Behold, I have found one which will go with me." Then he said : " Call him unto me, that I may know of what tribe he is, and whether he be a trusty man to go with thee."

So he called him, and he came in, and they saluted one another. Then Tobit said unto him : " Brother, show me of what tribe and family thou art." To whom he said : " Dost thou seek for a tribe or family, or an hired man to go with thy son ? "

Then Tobit said unto him : " I would know, brother, thy kindred and name." And he answered : " I am Azarias, the son of Ananias

the great, and of thy brethren." Then Tobit said : " Thou art welcome, brother ; be not now angry with me, because I have enquired to know thy tribe and thy family ; for thou art my brother, of an honest and good stock : for I know Ananias and Jonathas, sons of that great Samaias, as we went together to Jerusalem to worship, and offered the firstborn, and the tenths of the fruits ; and they were not seduced with the error of our brethren : my brother, thou art of a good stock. But tell me, what wages shall I give thee ? Wilt thou a drachm a day, and things necessary, as to mine own son ? Yea, moreover, if ye return safe, I will add something to thy wages." So they were well pleased. Then said he to Tobias : " Prepare thyself for the journey, and God send you a good journey." And when his son had prepared all things for the journey, his father said : " Go thou with this man, and God, which dwelleth in heaven, prosper your journey, and the angel of God keep you company." So they went forth both, and the young man's dog with them.

But Anna his mother wept, and said to Tobit : " Why hast thou sent away our son ? is he not the staff of our hand, in going in and out before us ? Be not greedy to add money to money : but let it be as refuse in respect of our child. For that which the Lord hath given us to live with doth suffice us." Then said Tobit to her : " Take no care, my sister ; he shall return in safety, and thine eyes shall see him. For the good angel will keep him company, and his journey shall be prosperous, and he shall return safe." Then she made an end of weeping.

And as they went on their journey, they came in the evening to the river Tigris, and they lodged there. And when the young man went down to wash himself, a fish leaped out of the river, and would have devoured him. Then the angel said unto him : " Take the fish." And the young man laid hold of the fish, and drew it to land. To whom the angel said : " Open the fish, and take the heart and the liver and the gall, and put them up safely." So the young man did as the angel commanded him ; and when they had roasted the fish, they did eat it : then they both went on their way, till they drew near to Ecbatane. Then the young man said to the angel : " Brother Azarias, to what use is the heart and the liver and the gall of the fish ?" And he said unto him : " Touching the heart and the liver, if a devil or an evil spirit trouble any, we must make a smoke thereof before the man or the woman, and the party shall be no more vexed. As for the gall, it is good to anoint a man that hath whiteness in his eyes, and he shall be healed."

And when they were come near to Rages, the angel said to the young man : " Brother, to-day we shall lodge with Raguel, who is thy cousin ; he also hath one only daughter, named Sara ; I will

1
speak for her, that she may be given thee for a wife. For to thee doth the right of her appertain, seeing thou only art of her kindred. And the maid is fair and wise : now therefore hear me, and I will speak to her father ; and when we return from Rages we will celebrate the marriage : for I know that Raguel cannot marry her to another according to the law of Moses, but he shall be guilty of death, because the right of inheritance doth rather appertain to thee than to any other." Then the young man answered the angel : " I have heard, brother Azarias, that this maid hath been given to seven men, who all died in the marriage chamber. And now I am the only son of my father, and I am afraid, lest, if I go in unto her, I die, as the others before : for a wicked spirit loveth her, which hurteth nobody, but those which come unto her : wherefore I also fear lest I die, and bring my father's and my mother's life because of me to the grave with sorrow : for they have no other son to bury them." Then the angel said unto him : " Dost thou not remember the precepts which thy father gave thee, that thou shouldst marry a wife of thine own kindred ? wherefore hear me, O my brother ; for she shall be given thee to wife ; and make thou no reckoning of the evil spirit ; for this same night shall she be given thee in marriage. And when thou shalt come into the marriage chamber, thou shalt take the ashes of perfume, and shalt lay upon them some of the heart and liver of the fish, and shalt make a smoke with it : and the devil shall smell it, and flee away, and never come again any more : but when thou shalt come to her, rise up both of you, and pray to God which is merciful, who will have pity on you, and save you : fear not, for she is appointed unto thee from the beginning ; and thou shalt preserve her, and she shall go with thee. Moreover I suppose that she shall bear thee children." Now when Tobias had heard these things, he loved her, and his heart was effectually joined to her.

And when they were come to Ecbatane, they came to the house of Raguel, and Sara met them : and after they had saluted one another, she brought them into the house. Then said Raguel to Edna his wife : " How like is this young man to Tobit my cousin ! " And Raguel asked them : " From whence are ye, brethren ? " To whom they said : " We are of the sons of Naphtali, which are captives in Nineve." Then he said to them : " Do ye know Tobit our kinsman ? " And they said : " We know him." Then he said : " Is he in good health ? " And they said : " He is both alive, and in good health " : and Tobias said : " He is my father." Then Raguel leaped up, and kissed him, and wept, and blessed him, and said unto him : " Thou art the son of an honest and good man." But when he had heard that Tobit was blind, he was sorrowful, and wept. And likewise Edna his wife and Sara his daughter wept. Moreover they entertained them cheerfully ; and after that they had killed a

ram of the flock, they set store of meat on the table.

Then said Tobias to Raphael : " Brother Azarias, speak of those things of which thou didst talk in the way, and let this business be dispatched." So he communicated the matter with Raguel : and Raguel said to Tobias : " Eat and drink, and make merry : for it is meet that thou shouldst marry my daughter : nevertheless I will declare unto thee the truth. I have given my daughter in marriage to seven men, who died that night they came in unto her : nevertheless for the present be merry." But Tobias said : " I will eat nothing here, till we agree and swear one to another." Raguel said : " Then take her from henceforth according to the manner, for thou art her cousin, and she is thine, and the merciful God give you good success in all things." Then he called his daughter Sara, and she came to her father, and he took her by the hand, and gave her to be wife to Tobias, saying : " Behold, take her after the law of Moses, and lead her away to thy father." And he blessed them ; and called Edna his wife, and took paper, and did write an instrument of covenants, and sealed it. Then they began to eat.

After Raguel called his wife Edna, and said unto her : " Sister, prepare another chamber, and bring her in thither." Which when she had done as he had bidden her, she brought her thither : and she wept, and she received the tears of her daughter, and said unto her : " Be of good comfort, my daughter ; the Lord of heaven and earth give thee joy for this thy sorrow : be of good comfort, my daughter."

And when they had supped, they brought Tobias in unto her. And as he went, he remembered the words of Raphael, and took the ashes of the perfumes, and put the heart and the liver of the fish thereupon, and made a smoke therewith. The which smell when the evil spirit had smelled, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him. And after that they were both shut in together, Tobias rose out of the bed, and said : " Sister, arise, and let us pray that God would have pity on us." Then began Tobias to say : " Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed is Thy holy and glorious name for ever ; let the heavens bless Thee, and all Thy creatures. Thou madest Adam, and gavest him Eve his wife for an helper and stay : of them came mankind : Thou hast said, It is not good that man should be alone ; let Us make unto him an aid like unto himself. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly : therefore mercifully ordain that we may become aged together." And she said with him : " Amen." So they slept both that night.

And Raguel arose, and went and made a grave, saying : " I fear lest he also be dead." But when Raguel was come into his house, he said unto his wife Edna : " Send one of the maids, and let her see whether he be alive : if he be not, that we may bury him, and no

man know it." So the maid opened the door, and went in, and found them both asleep, and came forth, and told them that he was alive. Then Raguel praised God, and said : " O God, Thou art worthy to be praised with all pure and holy praise ; therefore let Thy saints praise Thee with all Thy creatures ; and let all Thine angels and Thine elect praise Thee for ever. Thou art to be praised, for Thou hast made me joyful ; and that is not come to me which I suspected ; but Thou hast dealt with us according to Thy great mercy. Thou art to be praised, because Thou hast had mercy of two that were the only begotten children of their fathers : grant them mercy, O Lord, and finish their life in health with joy and mercy." Then Raguel bade his servants to fill the grave. And he kept the wedding feast fourteen days. For before the days of the marriage were finished, Raguel had said unto him by an oath, that he should not depart till the fourteen days of the marriage were expired ; and then he should take the half of his goods, and go in safety to his father ; and should have the rest when I and my wife be dead.

Then Tobias called Raphael, and said unto him : " Brother Azarias, take with thee a servant, and two camels, and go to Rages of Media to Gabael, and bring me the money, and bring him to the wedding. For Raguel hath sworn that I shall not depart.. But my father counteth the days ; and if I tarry long, he will be very sorry." So Raphael went out, and lodged with Gabael, and gave him the handwriting : who brought forth bags which were sealed up, and gave them to him. And early in the morning they went forth both together, and came to the wedding ; and Tobias blessed his wife.

Now Tobit his father counted every day : and when the days of the journey were expired, and they came not, then Tobit said : " Are they detained ? or is Gabael dead, and there is no man to give him the money ? " Therefore he was very sorry. Then his wife said unto him : " My son is dead, seeing he stayeth long " ; and she began to bewail him, and said : " Now I care for nothing, my son, since I have let thee go, the light of mine eyes." To whom Tobit said : " Hold thy peace, take no care, for he is safe." But she said : " Hold thy peace, and deceive me not ; my son is dead." And she went out every day into the way which they went, and did eat no meat on the daytime, and ceased not whole nights to bewail her son Tobias, until the fourteen days of the wedding were expired, which Raguel had sworn that he should spend there.

Then Tobias said to Raguel : " Let me go, for my father and my mother look no more to see me." But his father-in-law said unto him : " Tarry with me, and I will send to thy father, and they shall declare unto him how things go with thee." But Tobias said : " No, but let me go to my father." Then Raguel arose, and gave

him Sara his wife, and half his goods, servants, and cattle, and money : and he blessed them, and sent them away, saying : " The God of heaven give you a prosperous journey, my children." And he said to his daughter : " Honour thy father- and thy mother-in-law, which are now thy parents, that I may hear good report of thee." And he kissed her. Edna also said to Tobias : " The Lord of heaven restore thee, my dear brother, and grant that I may see thy children of my daughter Sara before I die, that I may rejoice before the Lord : behold, I commit my daughter unto thee of special trust ; wherefore do not entreat her evil."

After these things Tobias went his way, praising God that He had given him a prosperous journey, and blessed Raguel and Edna his wife, and went on his way till they drew near unto Nineve. Then Raphael said to Tobias : " Thou knowest, brother, how thou didst leave thy father : let us haste before thy wife, and prepare the house. And take in thine hand the gall of the fish." So they went their way, and the dog went after them. Now Anna sat looking about toward the way for her son. And when she espied him coming, she said to his father : " Behold, thy son cometh, and the man that went with him." Then said Raphael : " I know, Tobias, that thy father will open his eyes. Therefore anoint thou his eyes with the gall, and being pricked therewith, he shall rub, and the whiteness shall fall away, and he shall see thee."

Then Anna ran forth, and fell upon the neck of her son, and said unto him : " Seeing I have seen thee, my son, from henceforth I am content to die." And they wept both. Tobit also went forth toward the door, and stumbled : but his son ran unto him, and took hold of his father : and he strake of the gall on his father's eyes, saying : " Be of good hope, my father." And when his eyes began to smart, he rubbed them ; and the whiteness scaled away from the corners of his eyes : and when he saw his son, he fell upon his neck. And he wept, and said : " Blessed art Thou, O God, and blessed is Thy name for ever ; and blessed are all Thine holy angels : for Thou hast scourged, and hast taken pity on me ; for, behold, I see my son Tobias." And his son went in rejoicing, and told his father the great things that had happened to him in Media.

Then Tobit went out to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate of Nineve, rejoicing, and praising God : and they which saw him so marvelled, because he had received his sight. But Tobit gave thanks before them, because God had mercy on him. And when he came near to Sara his daughter-in-law, he blessed her, saying : " Thou art welcome, daughter : God be blessed, which hath brought thee unto us, and blessed be thy father and thy mother." And there was joy among all his brethren which were at Nineve. And Achiacharus, and Nasbas his brother's son, came : and Tobias' wedding was kept

seven days with great joy.

Then Tobit called his son Tobias, and said unto him : " My son, see that the man have his wages, which went with thee, and thou must give him more." And Tobias said unto him : " O father, it is no harm to me to give him half of these things which I have brought : for he hath brought me again to thee in safety, and made whole my wife, and brought me the money, and likewise healed thee." Then the old man said : " It is due unto him." So he called the angel, and he said unto him : " Take half of all that ye have brought, and go away in safety." Then he took them both apart, and said unto them :

" Bless God, praise Him, and magnify Him, and praise Him for the things which He hath done unto you in the sight of all that live. It is good to praise God, and exalt His name, and honourably to show forth the works of God ; therefore be not slack to praise Him. It is good to keep close the secret of a king, but it is honourable to reveal the works of God. Do that which is good, and no evil shall touch you. Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold : for alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life : but they that sin are enemies to their own life. Surely I will keep close nothing from you. For I said, It was good to keep close the secret of a king, but that it was honourable to reveal the works of God. Now therefore, when thou didst pray, and Sara thy daughter-in-law, I did bring the remembrance of your prayers before the Holy One : and when thou didst bury the dead, I was with thee likewise. And when thou didst not delay to rise up, and leave thy dinner, to go and cover the dead, thy good deed was not hid from me, but I was with thee. And now God hath sent me to heal thee and Sara thy daughter-in-law. I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One."

Then they were both troubled, and fell upon their faces : for they feared. But he said unto them : " Fear not, for it shall go well with you ; praise God therefore. For not of any favour of mine, but by the will of our God I came : wherefore praise Him for ever. All these days I did appear unto you ; but I did neither eat nor drink, but ye did see a vision. Now therefore give God thanks : for I go up to Him that sent me : but write all things which are done in a book." And when they arose, they saw him no more. Then they confessed the great and wonderful works of God, and how the angel of the Lord had appeared unto them.

Then Tobit wrote a prayer of rejoicing, and said :

Blessed be God that liveth for ever,
 And blessed be His kingdom.
 For He doth scourge, and hath mercy :
 He leadeth down to hell, and bringeth up again :
 Neither is there any that can avoid His hand.
 Confess Him before the Gentiles, ye children of Israel :
 For He hath scattered us among them.
 There declare His greatness,
 And extol Him before all the living :
 For He is our Lord,
 And He is the God our Father for ever.
 And He will scourge us for our iniquities, and will have mercy
 again,
 And will gather us out of all nations, among whom He hath
 scattered us.
 If ye turn to Him with your whole heart, and with your whole
 mind,
 And deal uprightly before Him,
 Then will He turn unto you,
 And will not hide His face from you.
 Therefore see what He will do with you,
 And confess Him with your whole mouth,
 And praise the Lord of might,
 And extol the everlasting King.
 In the land of my captivity do I praise Him,
 And declare His might and majesty to a sinful nation.
 O ye sinners, turn and do justice before Him :
 Who can tell if He will accept you, and have mercy on you ?
 I will extol my God,
 And my soul shall praise the King of heaven,
 And shall rejoice in His greatness.
 Let all men speak,
 And let all praise Him for His righteousness.
 O Jerusalem, the holy city,
 He will scourge thee for thy children's works,
 And will have mercy again on the sons of the righteous.
 Give praise to the Lord, for He is good :
 And praise the everlasting King,
 That His tabernacle may be builded in thee again with joy,
 And let Him make joyful there in thee those that are captives,
 And love in thee for ever those that are miserable.
 Many nations shall come from far to the name of the Lord God
 With gifts in their hands, even gifts to the King of heaven ;
 All generations shall praise Thee
 With great joy.

Cursed are all they which hate Thee,
 And blessed shall all be which love Thee for ever.
 Rejoice and be glad for the children of the just :
 For they shall be gathered together,
 And shall bless the Lord of the just.
 O blessed are they which love Thee,
 They shall rejoice in Thy peace ;
 Blessed are they which have been sorrowful for all Thy scourges ;
 For they shall rejoice for Thee,
 When they have seen all Thy glory,
 And shall be glad for ever.
 Let my soul bless God the great King.
 For Jerusalem shall be built up with sapphires, and emeralds,
 and precious stone :
 Thy walls and towers and battlements with pure gold.
 And the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and
 carbuncle and stones of Ophir.
 And all her streets shall say, Alleluia ; and they shall praise
 him,
 Saying, Blessed be God, which hath extolled it for ever.

So Tobit made an end of praising God. And he was eight and
 fifty years old when he lost his sight, which was restored to him after
 eight years : and he gave alms, and he increased in the fear of the
 Lord God, and praised Him. And when he was very aged, he called
 his son, and the six sons of his son, and said to him : “ My son, take
 thy children ; for, behold, I am aged, and am ready to depart out
 of this life. Go into Media, my son, for I surely believe those things
 which Jonas the prophet spake of Nineve, that it shall be over-
 thrown ; and that for a time peace shall rather be in Media ; and
 that our brethren shall lie scattered in the earth from that good land :
 and Jerusalem shall be desolate, and the house of God in it shall be
 burned, and shall be desolate for a time ; and that again God will
 have mercy on them, and bring them again into the land, where they
 shall build a temple, but not like to the first, until the time of that
 age be fulfilled ; and afterward they shall return from all places of
 their captivity, and build up Jerusalem gloriously, and the house of
 God shall be built in it for ever with a glorious building, as the
 prophets have spoken thereof. And all nations shall turn, and fear
 the Lord God truly, and shall bury their idols. So shall all nations
 praise the Lord, and His people shall confess God, and the Lord shall
 exalt His people ; and all those which love the Lord God in truth and
 justice shall rejoice, showing mercy to our brethren. And now, my
 son, depart out of Nineve, because that those things which the pro-
 phet Jonas spake shall surely come to pass. But keep thou the

law and the commandments, and show thyself merciful and just, that it may go well with thee. And bury me decently, and thy mother with me ; but tarry no longer at Nineve. Remember, my son, how Aman handled Achiacharus that brought him up, how out of light he brought him into darkness, and how he rewarded him again : yet Achiacharus was saved, but the other had his reward : for he went down into darkness. Manasses gave alms, and escaped the snares of death which they had set for him : but Aman fell into the snare, and perished. Wherefore now, my son, consider what alms doeth, and how righteousness doth deliver."

When he had said these things, he gave up the ghost in the bed, being an hundred and eight and fifty years old ; and he buried him honourably. And when Anna his mother was dead, he buried her with his father. But Tobias departed with his wife and children to Ecbatane to Raguel his father-in-law, where he became old with honour, and he buried his father- and mother-in-law honourably, and he inherited their substance, and his father Tobit's. And he died at Ecbatane in Media, being an hundred and seven and twenty years old. But before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineve, which was taken by Nabuchodonosor and Assuerus : and before his death he rejoiced over Nineve.

HEBREW LITERATURE

SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS

THERE dwelt a man in Babylon, called Joakim : and he took a wife, whose name was Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, a very fair woman, and one that feared the Lord. Her parents also were righteous, and taught their daughter according to the law of Moses. Now Joakim was a great rich man, and had a fair garden joining unto his house : and to him resorted the Jews ; because he was more honourable than all others. The same year were appointed two of the ancients of the people to be judges, such as the Lord spake of, that wickedness came from Babylon from ancient judges, who seemed to govern the people. These kept much at Joakim's house : and all that had any suits in law came unto them.

Now when the people departed away at noon, Susanna went into her husband's garden to walk. And the two elders saw her going in every day, and walking ; so that their lust was inflamed toward her. And they perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments. And albeit they both were wounded with her love, yet durst not one show another his grief. For they were ashamed to declare their lust, that they desired to have to do with her. Yet they watched diligently from day to day to see her. And the one said to the other : " Let us now go home : for it is dinner time." So when they were gone out, they parted the one from the other, and turning back again they came to the same place ; and after that they had asked one another the cause, they acknowledged their lust : then appointed they a time both together, when they might find her alone.

And it fell out, as they watched a fit time, she went in as before with two maids only, and she was desirous to wash herself in the garden : for it was hot. And there was nobody there save the two elders, that had hid themselves, and watched her. Then she said to her maids : " Bring me oil and washing balls, and shut the garden doors, that I may wash me." And they did as she bade them, and shut the garden doors, and went out themselves at privy doors to fetch the things that she had commanded them : but they saw not the elders, because they were hid.

Now when the maids were gone forth, the two elders rose up, and

ran unto her, saying : " Behold, the garden doors are shut, that no man can see us, and we are in love with thee ; therefore consent unto us, and lie with us. If thou wilt not, we will bear witness against thee, that a young man was with thee : and therefore thou didst send away thy maids from thee."

Then Susanna sighed, and said : " I am straitened on every side : for if I do this thing, it is death unto me : and if I do it not, I cannot escape your hands. It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not do it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord." With that Susanna cried with a loud voice : and the two elders cried out against her. Then ran the one, and opened the garden door. So when the servants of the house heard the cry in the garden, they rushed in at a privy door, to see what was done unto her. But when the elders had declared their matter, the servants were greatly ashamed : for there was never such a report made of Susanna.

And it came to pass the next day, when the people were assembled to her husband Joakim, the two elders came also full of mischievous imagination against Susanna to put her to death : and said before the people, Send for Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, Joakim's wife. And so they sent. So she came with her father and mother, her children, and all her kindred.

Now Susanna was a very delicate woman, and beauteous to behold. And these wicked men commanded to uncover her face (for she was covered), that they might be filled with her beauty. Therefore her friends and all that saw her wept. Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head. And she weeping looked up toward heaven : for her heart trusted in the Lord. And the elders said : " As we walked in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, and shut the garden doors, and sent the maids away. Then a young man, who there was hid, came unto her, and lay with her. Then we that stood in a corner of the garden, seeing this wickedness, ran unto them. And when we saw them together, the man we could not hold : for he was stronger than we, and opened the door, and leaped out. But having taken this woman, we asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us : these things do we testify."

Then the assembly believed them, as those that were the elders and judges of the people : so they condemned her to death. Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said : " O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be : Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold, I must die ; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me."

And the Lord heard her voice. Therefore when she was led to be put to death, the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a youth, whose

name was Daniel : who cried with a loud voice : " I am clear from the blood of this woman." Then all the people turned them toward him, and said : " What mean these words that thou hast spoken ? "

So he standing in the midst of them said : " Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that without examination or knowledge of the truth ye have condemned a daughter of Israel ? Return again to the place of judgment : for they have borne false witness against her." Wherefore all the people turned again in haste, and the elders said unto him : " Come, sit down among us, and show it us, seeing God hath given thee the honour of an elder."

Then said Daniel unto them : " Put these two aside one far from another, and I will examine them." So when they were put asunder one from another, he called one of them, and said unto him : " O thou that art waxen old in wickedness, now thy sins which thou hast committed aforetime are come to light : for thou hast pronounced false judgment, and hast condemned the innocent, and hast let the guilty go free ; albeit the Lord saith, The innocent and righteous shalt thou not slay. Now then, if thou hast seen her, tell me, Under what tree sawest thou them companying together ? " Who answered : " Under a mastic tree." And Daniel said : " Very well ; thou hast lied against thine own head ; for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two."

So he put him aside, and commanded to bring the other, and said unto him : " O thou seed of Canaan, and not of Juda, beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thine heart. Thus have ye dealt with the daughters of Israel, and they for fear companied with you : but the daughter of Juda would not abide your wickedness. Now therefore tell me, Under what tree didst thou take them companying together ? " Who answered : " Under an holm tree." Then said Daniel unto him : " Well ; thou hast also lied against thine own head : for the angel of God waiteth with the sword to cut thee in two, that He may destroy you." With that all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in Him.

And they arose against the two elders, for Daniel had convicted them of false witness by their own mouth : and according to the law of Moses they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbour : and they put them to death. Thus the innocent blood was saved the same day.

Therefore Chelcias and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Joakim her husband, and all the kindred, because there was no dishonesty found in her.

From that day forth was Daniel had in great reputation in the sight of the people.

HEBREW LITERATURE

BEL AND THE DRAGON

AND King Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus of Persia received his kingdom. And Daniel conversed with the King, and was honoured above all his friends. Now the Babylonians had an idol, called Bel, and there were spent upon him every day twelve great measures of fine flour, and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine. And the King worshipped it, and went daily to adore it: but Daniel worshipped his own God.

And the King said unto him: "Why dost not thou worship Bel?" Who answered and said: "Because I may not worship idols made with hands, but the living God, who hath created the heaven and the earth, and hath sovereignty over all flesh." Then said the King unto him: "Thinkest thou not that Bel is a living god? seest thou not how much he eateth and drinketh every day?" Then Daniel smiled, and said: "O King, be not deceived: for this is but clay within, and brass without, and did never eat or drink anything." So the King was wroth, and called for his priests, and said unto them: "If ye tell me not who this is that devoureth these expenses, ye shall die. But if ye can certify me that Bel devoureth them, then Daniel shall die: for he hath spoken blasphemy against Bel." And Daniel said unto the King: "Let it be according to thy word."

Now the priests of Bel were threescore and ten, beside their wives and children. And the King went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. So Bel's priests said: "Lo, we go out: but thou, O King, set on the meat, and make ready the wine, and shut the door fast, and seal it with thine own signet; and to-morrow when thou comest in, if thou findest not that Bel hath eaten up all, we will suffer death: or else Daniel, that speaketh falsely against us." And they little regarded it: for under the table they had made a privy entrance, whereby they entered in continually, and consumed those things. So when they were gone forth, the King set meats before Bel. Now Daniel had commanded his servants to bring ashes, and those they strewed throughout all the temple in the presence of the King alone: then ~~went~~ they out, and shut the door, and sealed it with the King's signet, and so departed.

Now in the night came the priests with their wives and children, as

they were wont to do, and did eat and drink up all. In the morning betime the King arose, and Daniel with him. And the King said : " Daniel, are the seals whole ? " And he said : " Yea, O King, they be whole." And as soon as he had opened the door, the King looked upon the table, and cried with a loud voice : " Great art thou, O Bel, and with thee is no deceit at all." Then laughed Daniel, and held the King that he should not go in, and said : " Behold now the pavement, and mark well whose footsteps are these." And the King said : " I see the footsteps of men, women, and children." And then the King was angry, and took the priests with their wives and children, who showed him the privy doors, where they came in, and consumed such things as were upon the table. Therefore the King slew them, and delivered Bel into Daniel's power, who destroyed him and his temple.

And in that same place there was a great dragon, which they of Babylon worshipped. And the King said unto Daniel : " Wilt thou also say that this is of brass ? lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh ; thou canst not say that he is no living god : therefore worship him." Then said Daniel unto the King : " I will worship the Lord my God : for He is the living God. But give me leave, O King, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff." The King said : " I give thee leave."

Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof : this he put in the dragon's mouth, and so the dragon burst in sunder : and Daniel said : " Lo, these are the gods ye worship." When they of Babylon heard that, they took great indignation, and conspired against the King, saying : " The King is become a Jew, and he hath destroyed Bel, he hath slain the dragon, and put the priests to death." So they came to the King, and said : " Deliver us Daniel, or else we will destroy thee and thine house." Now when the King saw that they pressed him sore, being constrained, he delivered Daniel unto them : who cast him into the lions' den : where he was six days. And in the den there were seven lions, and they had given them every day two carcases, and two sheep : which then were not given to them, to the intent they might devour Daniel.

Now there was in Jewry a prophet, called Habakkuk, who had made pottage, and had broken bread in a bowl, and was going into the field, for to bring it to the reapers. But the angel of the Lord said unto Habakkuk : " Go, carry the dinner that thou hast into Babylon unto Daniel, who is in the lions' den." And Habakkuk said : " Lord, I never saw Babylon ; neither do I know where the den is." Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown, and bare him by the hair of his head, and through the vehemency of his spirit set him in Babylon over the den. And Habakkuk cried,

saying : " O Daniel, Daniel, take the dinner which God hath sent thee." And Daniel said : " Thou hast remembered me, O God : neither hast Thou forsaken them that seek Thee and love Thee." So Daniel arose, and did eat : and the angel of the Lord set Habakkuk in his own place again immediately.

Upon the seventh day the King went to bewail Daniel : and when he came to the den, he looked in, and, behold, Daniel was sitting. Then cried the King with a loud voice, saying : " Great art Thou, O Lord God of Daniel, and there is none other beside Thee." And he drew him out, and cast those that were the cause of his destruction into the den : and they were devoured in a moment before his face.

TAO CHIEN
CHINESE, 420 A.D.

THE PEACH-BLOSSOM FOUNTAIN

TOWARDS the close of the fourth century, a certain fisherman of Wu-ling, who had followed up one of the river branches without taking note whither he was going came suddenly upon a grove of peach-trees in full bloom, extending some distance on each bank, with not a tree of any other kind in sight. The beauty of the scene and the exquisite perfume of the flowers filled the heart of the fisherman with surprise, as he proceeded onwards, anxious to reach the limit of this lovely grove. He found that the peach-trees ended where the water began, at the foot of a hill, and there he espied what seemed to be a cave with light issuing from it.

So he made fast his boat, and crept in through a narrow entrance, which shortly ushered him into a new world of level country, of fine houses, of rich fields, of fine pools, and of luxuriance of mulberry and bamboo. Highways of traffic ran north and south ; sounds of crowing cocks and barking dogs were heard around ; the dress of the people who passed along or were at work in the fields was of a strange cut ; while young and old alike appeared to be contented and happy.

One of the inhabitants, catching sight of the fisherman, was greatly astonished ; but, after learning whence he came, insisted on carrying him home, and killed a chicken and placed some wine before him. Before long, all the people of the place had turned out to see the visitor, and they informed him that their ancestors had sought refuge here, with their wives and families, from the troublous times of the House of Ch'in, adding that they had thus become finally cut off from the rest of the human race. They then inquired about the politics of the day, ignorant of the establishment of the Han dynasty, and of course of the later dynasties which had succeeded it. And when the fisherman told them the story, they grieved over the vicissitudes of human affairs.

Each in turn invited the fisherman to his home and entertained

him hospitably, until at length the latter prepared to take his leave.

"It will not be worth while to talk about what you have seen to the outside world," said the people of the place to the fisherman, as he bade them farewell and returned to his boat, making mental notes of his route as he proceeded on his homeward voyage.

When he reached home, he at once went and reported what he had seen to the Governor of the district, and the Governor sent off men with him to seek, by the aid of the fisherman's notes, to discover this unknown region. But he was never able to find it again. Subsequently, another desperate attempt was made by a famous adventurer to pierce the mystery; but he also failed, and died soon afterwards of chagrin, from which time forth no further attempts were made.¹

¹ The whole story is allegorical, and signifies that the fisherman had been strangely permitted to go back once again into the peach-blossom days of his youth.

PÖ CHÜ-YI

CHINESE, 772 A.D.

THE LUTE-GIRL'S LAMENT

By night, at the riverside, adieus were spoken : beneath the maple's flower-like leaves, blooming amid autumnal decay. Host had dismounted to speed the parting guest, already on board his boat. Then a stirrup-cup went round, but no flute, no guitar, was heard. And so, ere the heart was warmed with wine, came words of cold farewell, beneath the bright moon glittering over the bosom of the broad stream . . . when suddenly, across the water, a lute broke forth into sound. Host forgot to go, guest lingered on, wondering whence the music, and asking who the performer might be.

At this, all was hushed, but no answer given. A boat approached, and the musician was invited to join the party. Cups were refilled, lamps trimmed again, and preparations for festivity renewed.

At length, after much pressing, she came forth, hiding her face behind her lute ; and twice or thrice, sweeping the strings, betrayed emotion ere her song was sung. Then every note she struck swelled with pathos deep and strong as though telling the tale of a wrecked and hopeless life, while with bent head and rapid finger she poured forth her soul in melody. Now softly, now slowly, her plectrum sped to and fro ; now this air, now that, loudly, with the crash of falling rain, softly, as the murmur of whispered words ; now loud and soft together, like the patter of pearls and pearllets dropping upon a marble dish. Or liquid, like the warbling of the mango-bird in the bush ; trickling, like the streamlet on its downward course. And then like the torrent, stilled by the grip of frost, so for a moment was the music lulled, in a passion too deep for sound.¹ Then, as bursts the water from the broken vase, as clash the arms upon the mailed horseman, so fell the plectrum once more upon the strings with a slash like the rent of silk.

Silence on all sides : not a sound stirred the air. The autumn moon shone silver athwart the tide, as with a sigh the musician thrust her plectrum beneath the strings and quietly prepared to take leave.

¹ "The sure perception of the exact moment when the rest should be silence."

"My childhood," said she, "was spent at the capital, in my home near the hills. At thirteen, I learnt the guitar, and my name was enrolled among the primas of the day. The maëstro himself acknowledged my skill: the most beauteous of women envied my lovely face. The youths of the neighbourhood vied with each other to do me honour. A single song brought me I know not how many costly bales. Golden ornaments and silver pins were smashed, blood-red skirts of silk were stained with wine, in oft-times echoing applause. And so I laughed on from year to year, while the spring breeze and autumn moon swept over my careless head.

"Then my brother went away to the wars: my mother died. Nights passed and mornings came; and with them my beauty began to fade. My doors were no longer thronged: but few cavaliers remained. So I took a husband, and became a trader's wife. He was all for gain, and little recked of separation from me. Last month he went off to buy tea, and I remained behind, to wander in my lonely boat on moon-lit nights over the cold wave, thinking of the happy days gone by, my reddened eyes telling of tearful dreams."

The sweet melody of the lute had already moved my soul to pity, and now these words pierced me to the heart again.

"O lady," I cried, "we are companions in misfortune, and need no ceremony to be friends. Last year I quitted the Imperial city, banished to this fever-stricken spot, where in its desolation, from year's end to year's end, no flute nor guitar is heard. I live by the marshy river-bank, surrounded by yellow reeds and stunted bamboos. Day and night no sounds reach my ears save the blood-stained note of the nightjar, the gibbon's mournful wail. Hill songs I have, and village pipes with their harsh discordant twang. But now that I listen to thy lute's discourse, methinks 'tis the music of the gods. Prithee sit down awhile and sing to us yet again, while I commit thy story to writing."

Grateful to me (for she had been standing long), the lute-girl sat down and quickly broke forth into another song, sad and soft, unlike the song of just now. Then all her hearers melted into tears unrestrained; and none flowed more freely than mine, until my bosom was wet with weeping.

CELTIC 7TH CENTURY

THE FATE OF DEIRDRE

KING CONOR and the nobles of Ulster went to a feast in the house of Feidlimid, the son of Dall, who was teller of tales to the King. And Conor and his men were joyful and light of heart, drinking their ale to the music of the minstrels, and listening to the chants of the bards, the tales of the story-tellers, and the prophecies of the druids and those who number the moon and the stars. And while the drinking-horns went round about the board and the revellers shouted in their mirth, the wife of Feidlimid bore a lovely and well-shaped daughter.

Cathbad, the chief druid of Erin, chanced to be in the house ; and he rose up, and took his ancient books, and went out into the field and looked at the clouds of the air and the position of the stars and moon, to see the fate and fortune of the child. And the signs were so terrible that he returned in haste to Conor and the nobles of the Red Branch, and told them the child would grow up into a fair woman who would bring woe upon Ulster.

"She will be tall, with long tresses of golden hair and smiling lips," cried the druid ; "and for her love many chiefs shall strive, and great kings shall sue for her favour. For her the heroes of Ulster shall war in their chariots, and many men will be slain. Deirdre shall be her name, and evil is the fate that will fall upon her !"

"Let the child be slain !" shouted the nobles of the Red Branch. And they rose up in anger to put the little child to death : but Conor stayed them.

"This thing must not be done," said the King. "It is not seemly to fight against fate, and it is an accursed thing to destroy the life of an innocent babe. Look how beautiful the child is, and how pleasant her laugh ! Great shame would it be to quench her life, O ye nobles of Ulster and heroes of the Red Branch ! I will submit to the foretellings of the seer, but I will not submit to do a base deed to escape from what is to come. If you think that the fate the druid foretells cannot be avoided, then kill yourselves each with his own hand. But do not shed the blood of an innocent babe ; for that would bring a curse upon our land. I will take the girl under my

care, and if she live and I last, she shall become my wife and my Queen. So I swear by the sun and the moon, to all the men of Erin, that if one of them attempts to destroy her, now or hereafter, he shall not live while I have life in my body ! ”

And the nobles of Ulster listened in silence and stayed without speaking, till the heroes of the Red Branch rose up together and cried : “ Right is thy judgment, high King of Ulster, and it is our duty to see thy will is done ! ”

So Conor took the child under his protection, and she was brought up in a fortress of the Red Branch at some distance from the burg of Emain ; and an old woman, Levorcham, waited upon her, and fed her with rich meat and drink that she might grow tall and strong. And so that none of the men of Ulster might look upon her till the time came for her to marry the King, all the windows in the front of the fort were closed, and only the windows at the rear were opened. A beautiful orchard, full of fruit, grew behind the fort, and here Deirdre walked under the eye of her nurse at the beginning and the end of the day, beneath the shade of the fresh leaves and boughs, and by the side of a pleasant stream that wound softly through the middle of the orchard. And about the orchard was a high wall; and four savage dogs, sent from Conor, guarded the walls, so that a man’s life was in peril if he approached the place. For no man was allowed to come near Deirdre, save only Cailcin, her teacher, and King Conor himself.

And Deirdre grew like a young flowering tree, till her beauty was beyond that of any other woman. And when she was but fourteen years of age, she was ripe for marriage, and Conor thought to take her to his couch. It was in the winter-time, and the ground was covered with snow, and Cailcin killed a calf to prepare a roast for her, and the blood of the calf fell on the snow, and a raven flew down to drink it. This Deirdre marked as she sat by a window, gazing into the garden, and she sighed so deeply that her old nurse, Levorcham, heard her.

“ Why are you sorrowful ? ” said the nurse.
“ A desire has come to me,” said Deirdre. “ One man only will I love—he who has the three colours that I see here. His hair must be as black as the raven, his cheeks red like the blood, and his body as white as the snow.”

“ Honour and all happiness to you ! ” said Levorcham. “ The man you desire is not far away. He lives near at hand, and the name of him is Naisi, the son of Usnach.”

“ I shall never be happy again,” said Deirdre, “ till the time comes when I see him.”

And on a certain day it happened that Naisi was alone on the wall of the neighbouring burg of Emain, and he sent his war-cry ringing in

music over the land. Musical was the cry that the sons of Usnach were used to send forth. All the kine that heard their ringing melody gave two-thirds more milk than was their wont : and every man who heard their cry took pleasure in it and was made joyful. And wonderful was the play that these men made with their weapons. Had all the men of Ulster come up against them in one place, and had the sons of Usnach set their backs against each other, the men of Ulster would not have conquered these three men, so marvellously skilled were they in parry and guard. And swift were they of foot when they went hunting, for it was their practice to chase their quarry to its death.

Naisi went down into the plain of Emain, and Deirdre escaped from the fortress, and ran past him, and he did not know who she was.

"Fair is the young heifer that springs by me!" he said.

"Well may the young heifers be fair," she said, "in a land where none of them can find a mate!"

"Thou hast thy mate," said Naisi, knowing her at last by her great beauty—"the bull of the whole land of Ulster—Conor the King!"

"I would choose between you two," she said, "and it is the younger I would take."

"No," said Naisi. "No! I fear the prophecy of Cathbad!"

"Do you mean to refuse me?" she said.

"Yes, in truth," he replied.

But, springing upon him, Deirdre seized him by the ears and shook him.

"Two ears of shame shall you have," she cried, "two ears of shame and mockery, if you do not take me with you!"

"Release me," he said. "Release me, O my wife!"

Deirdre stood aside, and Naisi sent forth his ringing war-cry. The men of Ulster heard it, and one after another they sprang up and took their weapons; and the sons of Usnach came out in haste to restrain their brother.

"What has happened?" they cried. "What is it you have done? Do not let war be made between us and the men of Ulster by any fault of yours."

Then Naisi told them all that had happened between him and Deirdre.

"Woe shall come on you for this," said his brothers, "and shame will rest on you all your life! We must take her to some other land. For there is no king in Erin who will fail to welcome us if we go to him."

And after talking together, they went away that night with a hundred and fifty fighting men, and the same number of women,

hounds, and servants : and Deirdre went with them. For many days they roved through Erin, doing service to one king after another : and many times Conor of Ulster tried to bring about their death, laying ambushes for them and sending men to slay them while they were feasting or sleeping. And the sons of Usnach wandered to the west, and from there they went to the north-east ; and at last the men of Ulster, coming in great strength, drove them out of Erin, and they sailed away to the land of Alba (Scotland). And in the wildernesses of Alba they dwelt. For a time they lived by chasing the deer upon the mountains, and when the wild game failed them, they raided the cattle of the men of Alba. Then the men of Alba gathered in force to destroy them, and to escape from death they did homage to the King of Alba, and he accepted them as his men, and they served him in his wars.

Fearing that the men of Alba might see Deirdre, and slay them all to obtain her, the sons of Usnach built a house for her in the fields by the King's burg, and set their dwelling-places around it. But the high steward of the King was out walking early one morning, and he made a round about the house, and looking in he saw Naisi sleeping by the side of Deirdre. And hastening back to the King of Alba, he awakened him.

"Unto this day," he said, "we have seen no woman worthy to be your Queen, but now we have found her. For Naisi, the son of Usnach, has a wife that would grace the Emperor of the western world. Slay the man and take his wife to yourself !"

"No," said the King, "I cannot do that. But you must go every day to her house and woo her for me in secret."

And this the steward did. But all that he said to Deirdre she straightway told to Naisi, and the King of Alba and his steward saw that nothing was to be obtained from her. So, by the order of the King, the sons of Usnach were sent continually into great perils and dangerous adventures and fierce wars, that they might be slain : but they bore themselves so bravely and skilfully in every combat that the King won no advantage over them. Then he gathered the men of Alba together to destroy the sons of Usnach, and the steward told Deirdre of this, and she brought the news to Naisi.

"Leave this place !" she said. "If you do not depart this very night, to-morrow you will all be done to death."

And the sons of Usnach marched away in the darkness, and settled on an island in the sea. Tidings of their misfortunes were brought to the men of Ulster, and they were sorry for the sons of Usnach.

"Sad is it, O Conor !" they said, "that the sons of Usnach should perish in a strange land for the sake of a bad woman ! It were better for them to return to their own land and come under thy protection,

than be slain by the hands of foes in a strange land ! ”

“ Let them come to us, then,” said Conor, “ and let men go as sureties to them.”

And the news was carried to the sons of Usnach.

“ This is good news for us,” they said, “ and gladly will we return to Erin. Bring Fergus as our surety, and Dubhtach, and Cormac, the son of Conor.”

And these three men went to them, and with them they came over the sea. But by the cunning of Conor, Fergus was asked to an ale-feast when he landed, and Dubhtach and Cormac stayed with him. But the sons of Usnach, being pledged to eat no meat till they had taken the food of Conor, went on with the son of Fergus, and came to the plain around Emain.

Now Conor had long been at war with Eogan, the son of Durthacht, and Eogan had come to Emain to make peace with him. And Conor now bade Eogan go out with the royal fighting men, and slay the sons of Usnach as they were coming to the King. The sons of Usnach stood on a level space in the plain, and the women sat on the walls of Emain. Eogan advanced with the King's fighting men across the plain, and the son of Fergus came and stood by the side of Naisi. All the greeting Eogan gave them was a fierce thrust of his spear. The son of Fergus sprang forward, and threw both arms about Naisi, and fell with him, spreading his body above him to shield and shelter him. But Eogan drove his spear through the bodies of both men, and it was thus that Naisi was slain, with the body of the son of Fergus above him. Then murder was done all along the plain, and none escaped the point of the spears or the edge of the swords but Deirdre. Her hands were bound behind her back, and she was given into the power of Conor.

But when Fergus and Dubhtach and Cormac, the sureties, heard what had happened, they hastened unto Emain and did great deeds. With one thrust of his spear, Dubhtach slew Mane, a son of Conor, and Fiachna, his grandson : and Fergus killed Traighthren and his brother. Conor was right angry at this, and he came forth to fight them. And upon that day three hundred of the men of Ulster fell, and Dubhtach killed the women of Ulster and Fergus set Emain on fire. Then the two heroes, with three thousand fighting men, left their own land and went to Connaught, where Ailill and Queen Maeve gave them shelter ; and for sixteen years the cries and the lamentations of the people of Ulster did not cease. For every night Fergus and Dubhtach set out on a foray of vengeance, and made the Ulstermen tremble and wail.

For a year Deirdre lived on in the house of Conor. And all this time she smiled no smile of laughter nor raised her head from her knee. And little was the sleep she had or the food she took. And

when they brought minstrels to cheer her, she sang a keen for the sons of Usnach :

“ Though ¹Conor the king of the North rejoices
 In minstrel music of pipe and horn,
 Sweeter to me were the sound of the voices
 Of Usnach's sons in the early morn :
 When Naisi sang like a wave of the sea
 With Ardan and Aindle in harmony,
 Amid the bens and the glens of Alba,
 From which I fled to be thus forlorn !

“ Of all men under the arch of heaven
 Fairest to me was Usnach's son.
 Beauty and strength to him were given,
 And honour and daring till life was done.
 Friendly to me was the comely face
 Of Naisi, and loving was his embrace :
 Now earth lies black on his fair, white body—
 And I am Deirdre, the joyless one ! ”

And when Conor saw neither mirth nor kindness could win Deirdre and neither honours nor feastings gladdened her heart, he sent for Eogan, the son of Durthacht, who had slain Naisi in Emain plain. And Conor came with Eogan to the place where Deirdre was sitting.

“ Deirdre,” said the King, “ whom do you hate more of the two men now before you ? ”

“ You yourself,” she said.

“ Then you shall live with Eogan for a year,” said Conor ; and he gave Deirdre into Eogan's hand.

She was placed with Eogan in his chariot, and Conor entered the chariot and drove behind them. And as they were passing through the plain of Emain, Deirdre cast a fierce look at Eogan in front of her, and another at Conor behind her. For there was nothing in the world she hated more than these two men. And Conor saw this, as she looked at him and Eogan.

“ Ah, Deirdre ! ” he said. “ It is the glance a ewe gives when she is between two rams, that you cast on me and Eogan ! ” And when Deirdre heard this, she sprang up and gave a leap out of the chariot, and fell on a great rock in front of her, and shattered her head so that her brain was seen. Thus came Deirdre to her death.

CELTIC

THE DREAM OF MAXEN WLEDIG

MAXEN WLEDIG was Emperor of Rome, and he was a comelier man, and a better and a wiser, than any emperor that had been before him. And one day he held a council of kings, and he said to his friends, "I desire to go to-morrow to hunt."

And the next day in the morning he set forth with his retinue, and came to the valley of the river that flowed towards Rome. And he hunted through the valley until mid-day. And with him also were two-and-thirty crowned kings, that were his vassals; not for the delight of hunting went the Emperor with them, but to put himself on equal terms with those kings.

And the sun was high in the sky over their heads and the heat was great. And sleep came upon Maxen Wledig. And his attendants stood and set up their shields around him upon the shafts of their spears to protect him from the sun, and they placed a gold enamelled shield under his head; and so Maxen slept.

And he saw a dream. And this is the dream that he saw. He was journeying along the valley of the river towards its source; and he came to the highest mountain in the world. And he thought that the mountain was as high as the sky; and when he came over the mountain, it seemed to him that he went through the fairest and most level regions that man ever yet beheld, on the other side of the mountain. And he saw large and mighty rivers descending from the mountain to the sea, and towards the mouths of the rivers he proceeded.

And as he journeyed thus, he came to the mouth of the largest river ever seen. And he beheld a great city at the entrance of the river, and a vast castle in the city, and he saw many high towers of various colours in the castle. And he saw a fleet at the mouth of the river, the largest ever seen. And he saw one ship among the fleet; larger was it by far, and fairer, than all the others. Of such part of the ship as he could see above the water, one plank was gilded and the other silvered over. He saw a bridge of the bone of a whale

from the ship to the land, and he thought that he went along the bridge, and came into the ship. And a sail was hoisted on the ship, and along the sea and the ocean was it borne.

Then it seemed that he came to the fairest island in the whole world, and he traversed the island from sea to sea, even to the farthest shore of the island. Valleys he saw, and steeps, and rocks of wondrous height, and rugged precipices. Never yet saw he the like. And thence he beheld an island in the sea, facing this rugged land. And between him and this island was a country of which the plain was as large as the sea, the mountain as vast as the wood. And from the mountain he saw a river that flowed through the land and fell into the sea.

And at the mouth of the river he beheld a castle, the fairest that man ever saw, and the gate of the castle was open, and he went into the castle. And in the castle he saw a fair hall, of which the roof seemed to be all gold, the walls of the hall seemed to be entirely of glittering precious gems, the doors all seemed to be of gold. Golden seats he saw in the hall, and silver tables. And on a seat opposite to him he beheld two auburn-haired youths playing at chess. He saw a silver board for the chess, and golden pieces thereon. The garments of the youths were of jet-black satin, and chaplets of ruddy gold bound their hair, whereon were sparkling jewels of great price, rubies, and gems, alternately with imperial stones. Buskins of new Cordovan leather on their feet, fastened by slides of red gold.

And beside a pillar in the hall he saw a hoary-headed man, in a chair of ivory, with the figures of two eagles of ruddy gold thereon. Bracelets of gold were upon his arms, and many rings were on his hands, and a golden torque about his neck; and his hair was bound with a golden diadem. He was of powerful aspect. A chess-board of gold was before him, and a rod of gold, and a steel file in his hand. And he was carving out chessmen.

And he saw a maiden sitting before him in a chair of ruddy gold. Not more easy than to gaze upon the sun when brightest, was it to look upon her by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon the maiden, with clasps of red gold at the breast; and a surcoat of gold tissue upon her, and a frontlet of red gold upon her head, and rubies and gems were in the frontlet, alternating with pearls and imperial stones. And a girdle of ruddy gold was around her. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld.

The maiden arose from her chair before him, and he threw his arms about the neck of the maiden, and they two sat down together in the chair of gold: and the chair was not less roomy for them both, than for the maiden alone. And as he had his arms about the

maiden's neck, and his cheek by her cheek, behold, through the chafing of the dogs at their leashing, and the clashing of the shields as they struck against each other, and the beating together of the shafts of the spears, and the neighing of the horses and their prancing, the Emperor awoke.

And when he awoke, nor spirit nor existence was left him, because of the maiden whom he had seen in his sleep, for the love of the maiden pervaded his whole frame. Then his household spake unto him.

"Lord," said they, "is it not past the time for thee to take thy food?"

Thereupon the Emperor mounted his palfrey, the saddest man that mortal ever saw, and went forth towards Rome.

And thus he was during the space of a week. When they of the household went to drink wine and mead out of golden vessels, he went not with any of them. When they went to listen to songs and tales, he went not with them there; neither could he be persuaded to do anything but sleep. And as often as he slept, he beheld in his dreams the maiden he loved best; but except when he slept he saw nothing of her, for he knew not where in the world she was.

One day the page of the chamber spake unto him; now, although he was page of the chamber, he was King of the Romans.

"Lord," said he, "all the people revile thee."

"Wherefore do they revile me?" asked the Emperor.

"Because they can get neither message nor answer from thee as men should have from their lord. This is the cause why thou art spoken evil of."

"Youth," said the Emperor, "do thou bring unto me the wise men of Rome, and I will tell them wherefore I am sorrowful."

Then the wise men of Rome were brought to the Emperor, and he spake to them.

"Sages of Rome," said he, "I have seen a dream. And in the dream I beheld a maiden, and because of the maiden is there neither life, nor spirit, nor existence within me."

"Lord," they answered, "since thou judgest us worthy to counsel thee, we will give thee counsel. And this is our counsel: that thou send messengers for three years to the three parts of the world to seek for thy dream. And as thou knowest not what day or what night good news may come to thee, the hope thereof will support thee."

So the messengers journeyed for the space of a year, wandering about the world, and seeking tidings concerning his dream. But

when they came back at the end of the year, they knew not one word more than they did the day they set forth. And then was the Emperor exceeding sorrowful, for he thought that he should never have tidings of her whom best he loved.

Then spoke the King of the Romans unto the Emperor.

"Lord," said he, "go forth to hunt by the way thou didst seem to go, whether it were to the east, or to the west."

So the Emperor went forth to the hunt, and he came to the bank of the river.

"Behold," said he, "this is where I was when I saw the dream, and I went towards the source of the river westward."

And thereupon thirteen messengers of the Emperor's set forth, and before them they saw a high mountain, which seemed to them to touch the sky. Now this was the guise in which the messengers journeyed; one sleeve was on the cap of each of them in front, as a sign that they were messengers, in order that through what hostile land soever they might pass no harm might be done them. And when they were come over this mountain, they beheld vast plains, and large rivers flowing therethrough.

"Behold," said they, "the land which our master saw."

And they went along the mouths of the rivers, until they came to the mighty river which they saw flowing to the sea, and the vast city, and the many-coloured high towers in the castle. They saw the largest fleet in the world, in the harbour of the river, and one ship that was larger than any of the others.

"Behold again," said they, "the dream that our master saw."

And in the great ship they crossed the sea, and came to the Island of Britain. And they traversed the island until they came to Snowdon.

"Behold," said they, "the rugged land that our master saw."

And they went forward until they saw Anglesey before them, and until they saw Arvon likewise.

"Behold," said they, "the land our master saw in his sleep."

And they saw Aber Sain, and a castle at the mouth of the river. The portal of the castle saw they open, and into the castle they went, and they saw a hall in the castle. Then said they:

"Behold, the hall which he saw in his sleep."

They went into the hall, and they beheld two youths playing at chess on the golden bench. And they beheld the hoary-headed man beside the pillar, in the ivory chair, carving chessmen. And they beheld the maiden sitting on a chair of ruddy gold.

The messengers bent down upon their knees.

"Empress of Rome, all hail!"

"Ha, gentles," said the maiden, "ye bear the seeming of honourable men, and the badge of envoys, what mockery is this ye do to me?"

"We mock thee not, lady; but the Emperor of Rome hath seen thee in his sleep, and he has neither life nor spirit left because of thee. Thou shalt have of us therefore the choice, lady, whether thou wilt go with us and be made Empress of Rome, or that the Emperor come hither and take thee for his wife?"

"Ha, lords," said the maiden, "I will not deny what ye say, neither will I believe it too well. If the Emperor love me, let him come here to seek me."

And by day and night the messengers hied them back. And when their horses failed, they bought other fresh ones. And when they came to Rome, they saluted the Emperor, and asked their boon, which was given to them according as they named it.

"We will be thy guides, lord," said they, "over sea and over land, to the place where is the woman whom best thou lovest, for we know her name, and her kindred, and her race."

And immediately the Emperor set forth with his army. And these men were his guides. Towards the Island of Britain they went over the sea and the deep. And he conquered the Island from Beli the son of Manogan, and his sons, and drove them to the sea, and went forward even unto Arvon. And the Emperor knew the land when he saw it. And when he beheld the castle of Aber Sain:

"Look yonder," said he, "there is the castle wherein I saw the damsel whom I best love."

And he went forward into the castle and into the hall, and there he saw Kynan the son of Eudav, and Adeon the son of Eudav, playing at chess. And he saw Eudav the son of Caradawc, sitting on a chair of ivory carving chessmen. And the maiden whom he had beheld in his sleep, he saw sitting on a chair of gold.

"Empress of Rome," said he, "all hail!"

And the Emperor threw his arms about her neck; and that night she became his bride.

And the next day, in the morning, the damsel asked her maiden portion. And he told her to name what she would. And she asked to have the Island of Britain for her father, from the Channel to the Irish Sea, together with the three adjacent Islands, to hold under the Empress of Rome; and to have three chief castles made for her, in whatever places she might choose in the Island of Britain. And

she chose to have the highest castle made at Arvon. And they brought thither earth from Rome that it might be more healthful for the Emperor to sleep, and sit, and walk upon. After that the two other castles were made for her, which were Caerlleon and Caermarthen.

And one day the Emperor went to hunt at Caermarthen, and he came as far as the top of Brevi Vawr, and there the Emperor pitched his tent. And that encamping place is called Cadeir Maxen, even to this day. And because that he built the castle with a myriad of men, he called it Caervyrddin.

Then Helen bethought her to make high roads from one castle to another throughout the Island of Britain. And the roads were made. And for this cause are they called the roads of Helen Luyddawc, that she was sprung from a native of this island, and the men of the Island of Britain would not have made these great roads for any save for her.

Seven years did the Emperor tarry in this Island. Now, at that time, the men of Rome had a custom, that whatsoever Emperor should remain in other lands more than seven years should remain to his own overthrow, and should never return to Rome again.

So they made a new Emperor. And this one wrote a letter of threat to Maxen. There was nought in the letter but only this :

“ If thou comest, and if thou ever comest to Rome.”

And even unto Caerlleon came this letter to Maxen, and these tidings. Then sent he a letter to the man who styled himself Emperor in Rome. There was nought in that letter also but only this :

“ If I come to Rome, and if I come.”

And thereupon Maxen set forth towards Rome with his army, and vanquished France and Burgundy, and every land on the way, and sat down before the city of Rome.

A year was the Emperor before the city, and he was no nearer taking it than the first day. And after him there came the brothers of Helen Luyddawc from the Island of Britain, and a small host with them, and better warriors were in that small host than twice as many Romans. And the Emperor was told that a host was seen, halting close to his army and encamping, and no man ever saw a fairer or better-appointed host for its size, nor more handsome standards.

And Helen went to see the host, and she knew the standards of her brothers. Then came Kynan the son of Eudav, and Adeon the son of Eudav, to meet the Emperor. And the Emperor was glad because of them, and embraced them.

Then they looked at the Romans as they attacked the city. Said Kynan to his brother :

"We will try to attack the city more expertly than this."

So they measured by night the height of the wall, and they sent their carpenters to the wood, and a ladder was made for every four men of their number. Now when these were ready, every day at mid-day the Emperors went to meat, and they ceased to fight on both sides till all had finished eating. And in the morning the men of Britain took their food, and they drank until they were invigorated. And while the two Emperors were at meat, the Britons came to the city, and placed their ladders against it, and forthwith they came in through the city.

The new Emperor had no time to arm himself when they fell upon him, and slew him, and many others with him. And three nights and three days were they subduing the men that were in the city and taking the castle. And others of them kept the city, lest any of the host of Maxen should come therein, until they had subjected all to their will.

Then spake Maxen to Helen Luyddawc.

"I marvel, lady," said he, "that thy brothers have not conquered this city for me."

"Lord, Emperor," she answered, "the wisest youths in the world are my brothers. Go thou thither and ask the city of them, and if it be in their possession thou shalt have it gladly."

So the Emperor and Helen went and demanded the city. And they told the Emperor that none had taken the city, and that none could give it him, but the men of the Island of Britain. Then the gates of the city of Rome were opened, and the Emperor sat on the throne, and all the men of Rome submitted themselves unto him.

The Emperor then said unto Kynan and Adeon :

"Lords," said he, "I have now had possession of the whole of my empire. This host give I unto you to vanquish whatever region ye may desire in the world."

So they set forth and conquered lands, and castles, and cities. And they slew all the men, but the women they kept alive. And thus they continued until the young men that had come with them were grown grey-headed, from the length of time they were upon this conquest.

Then spoke Kynan unto Adeon his brother :

"Whether wilt thou rather," said he, "tarry in this land, or go back into the land whence thou didst come forth?"

Now he chose to go back to his own land, and many with him. But Kynan tarried there with the other part and dwelt there.

And they took counsel and cut out the tongues of the women, lest they should corrupt their speech. And because of the silence of the

women from their own speech, the men of Armorica are called Britons. From that time there came frequently, and still comes, that language from the Island of Britain.

And this dream is called the Dream of Maxen Wledig, Emperor of Rome. And here it ends.

SIR THOMAS MALORY

circa 1470 A.D.

QUEEN GUENEVER'S MAYING

IT passed on from Candlemas until after Easter, that the month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom, and to bring forth fruit ; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, in likewise every lusty heart that is in any manner a lover, springeth and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in something to constrain him to some manner of thing more in that month than in any other month, for diverse causes. For then all herbs and trees renew a man and woman, and in likewise lovers call again to their mind old gentleness and old service, and many kind deeds that were forgotten by negligence.

For like as winter rasure doth alway arase and deface green summer, so fareth it by unstable love in man and woman. For in many persons there is no stability ; for we may see all day, for a little blast of winter's rasure, anon we shall deface and lay apart true love for little or nought, that cost much thing ; this is no wisdom nor stability, but it is feebleness of nature and great disworship, whomsoever useth this.

Therefore, like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in many gardens, so in likewise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world, first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promised his faith unto ; for there was never worshipful man nor worshipful woman, but they loved one better than another ; and worship in arms may never be foiled, but first reserve the honour to God, and secondly the quarrel must come of thy lady : and such love I call virtuous love. But nowadays men can not love seven night but they must have all their desires : that love may not endure by reason ; for where they be soon accorded, and hasty heat, soon it cooleth. Right so fareth love nowadays, spon hot, soon cold : this is no stability. But the old love was not so ; men and women could love together seven years, and no lycours lusts

were between them, and then was love, truth, and faithfulness : and lo, in likewise was used love in King Arthur's days.

Wherefore I liken love nowadays unto summer and winter ; for like as the one is hot and the other cold, so fareth love nowadays ; therefore all ye that be lovers call unto your remembrance the month of May, like as did Queen Guenever, for whom I make here a little mention, that while she lived she was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end.

So it befell in the month of May, Queen Guenever called unto her knights of the Table Round ; and she gave them warning that early upon the morrow she would ride on Maying into woods and fields beside Westminster.

" And I warn you that there be none of you but that he be well horsed, and that ye all be clothed in green, either in silk outhen in cloth ; and I shall bring with me ten ladies, and every knight shall have a lady behind him, and every knight shall have a squire and two yeomen ; and I will that ye all be well horsed."

So they made them ready in the freshest manner. And these were the names of the knights : Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Agravaine, Sir Brandiles, Sir Sagamore le Desirous, Sir Dodinas le Savage, Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, Sir Ladinas of the Forest Savage, Sir Persant of Inde, Sir Ironside, that was called the Knight of the Red Launds, and Sir Pelleas, the lover ; and these ten knights made them ready in the freshest manner to ride with the Queen.

And so upon the morn they took their horses with the Queen, and rode on Maying in woods and meadows as it pleased them, in great joy and delights ; for the Queen had cast to have been again with King Arthur at the furthest by ten of the clock, and so was that time her purpose.

Then there was a knight that hight Meliagrance, and he was son unto King Bagdemagus, and this knight had at that time a castle of the gift of King Arthur within seven mile of Westminster. And this knight, Sir Meliagrance, loved passing well Queen Guenever, and so had he done long and many years. And the book saith he had lain in a wait for to steal away the queen, but evermore he forbore for by cause of Sir Launcelot ; for in no wise he would meddle with the Queen an Sir Launcelot were in her company, outhen else an he were near hand her.

And that time was such a custom, the Queen rode never without a great fellowship of men of arms about her, and they were many good knights, and the most part were young men that would have worship ; and they were called the Queen's Knights, and never in no battle, tournament, nor jousts, they bare none of them no manner of knowledging of their own arms, but plain white shields, and thereby they were called the Queen's Knights. And then when it

happened any of them to be of great worship by his noble deeds, then at the next Feast of Pentecost, if there were any slain or dead, as there was none year that there failed but some were dead, then was there chosen in his stead that was dead, the most men of worship that were called the Queen's Knights. And thus they came up all first, or they were renowned men of worship, both Sir Launcelot and all the remnant of them.

But this knight, Sir Meliagrance, had espied the Queen well and her purpose, and how Sir Launcelot was not with her, and how she had no men of arms with her but the ten noble knights all arrayed in green for Maying. Then he purveyed him a twenty men of arms and an hundred archers for to destroy the Queen and her knights, for he thought that time was best season to take the Queen.

So as the Queen had Mayed and all her knights, all were bedashed with herbs, mosses and flowers, in the best manner and freshest. Right so came out of a wood Sir Meliagrance with an eight-score men well harnessed, as they should fight in a battle of arrest, and bade the Queen and her knights abide, for maugre their heads they should abide.

"Traitor knight," said Queen Guenever, "what cast thou for to do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a King's son, and knight of the Table Round, and thou to be about to dishonour the noble King that made thee knight; thou shamest all knighthood and thyself, and me I let thee wit shalt thou never shame, for I had lever cut mine own throat in twain rather than thou shouldst dishonour me."

"As for all this language," said Sir Meliagrance, "be it as it be may, for wit you well, madam, I have loved you many a year, and never or now could I get you at such an advantage as I do now, and therefore I will take you as I find you."

Then spake all the noble knights at once and said:

"Sir Meliagrance, wit thou well ye are about to jeopard your worship to dishonour, and also ye cast to jeopard our persons howbeit we be unarmed. Ye have us at a great avail, for it seemeth by you that ye have laid watch upon us; but rather than ye should put the Queen to shame and us all, we had as lief to depart from our lives, for an if we other ways did, we were shamed for ever."

Then said Sir Meliagrance: "Dress you as well as ye can, and keep the Queen."

Then the ten knights of the Table Round drew their swords, and the other let run at them with their spears, and the ten knights manly abode them, and smote away their spears that no spear did them none harm. Then they lashed together with swords, and anon Sir Kay, Sir Sagamore, Sir Agravaine, Sir Dodinas, Sir Ladinus, and Sir Ozanna were smitten to the earth with grimly wounds.

Then Sir Brandiles, and Sir Persant, Sir Ironside, Sir Pelleas fought long, and they were sore wounded, for these ten knights, or ever they were laid to the ground, slew forty men of the boldest and the best of them.

So when the Queen saw her knights thus dolefully wounded, and needs must be slain at the last, then for pity and sorrow she cried Sir Meliagrance :

"Slay not my noble knights, and I will go with thee upon this covenant, that thou save them, and suffer them not to be no more hurt, with this, that they be led with me wheresomever thou leadest me, for I will rather slay myself than I will go with thee, unless that these my noble knights may be in my presence."

"Madam," said Meliagrance, "for your sake they shall be led with you into mine own castle, with that ye will be ruled, and ride with me."

Then the Queen prayed the four knights to leave their fighting, and she and they would not depart.

"Madam," said Sir Pelleas, "we will do as ye do, for as for me I take no force of my life nor death."

For as the French book saith, Sir Pelleas gave such buffets there that none armour might hold him.

Then by the Queen's commandment they left battle, and dressed the wounded knights on horseback, some sitting, some overthwart their horses, that it was pity to behold them. And then Sir Meliagrance charged the Queen and all her knights that none of all her fellowship should depart from her; for full sore he dread Sir Launcelot du Lake, lest he should have any knowledging. All this espied the Queen, and privily she called unto her a child of her chamber that was swiftly horsed, to whom she said :

"Go thou, when thou seest thy time, and bear this ring unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, and pray him as he loveth me that he will see me and rescue me, if ever he will have joy of me; and spare not thy horse," said the Queen, "neither for water, neither for land."

So the child espied his time, and lightly he took his horse with the spurs, and departed as fast as he might. And when Sir Meliagrance saw him so flee, he understood that it was by the Queen's commandment for to warn Sir Launcelot. Then they that were best horsed chased him and shot at him, but from them all the child went suddenly. And then Sir Meliagrance said to the Queen :

"Madam, ye are about to betray me, but I shall ordain for Sir Launcelot that he shall not come lightly at you."

And then he rode with her, and they all, to his castle, in all the haste that they might. And by the way Sir Meliagrance laid in an ambushment the best archers that he might get in his country, to the number of thirty, to await upon Sir Launcelot, charging them

that if they saw such a manner of knight comé by the way upon a white horse, that in any wise they slay his horse, but in no manner of wise have not ado with him bodily, for he is over-hard to be overcome.

So this was done, and they were come to his castle, but in no wise the Queen would never let none of the ten knights and her ladies out of her sight, but always they were in her presence ; for the book saith, Sir Meliagrance durst make no masteries, for dread of Sir Launcelot, insomuch he deemed that he had warning. So when the child was departed from the fellowship of Sir Meliagrance, within a while he came to Westminster, and anon he found Sir Launcelot.

And when he had told his message, and delivered him the Queen's ring :

" Alas," said Sir Launcelot, " now I am shamed for ever, unless that I may rescue that noble lady from dishonour."

Then eagerly he asked his armour ; and ever the child told Sir Launcelot how the ten knights fought marvellously, and how Sir Pelleas, and Sir Ironside, and Sir Brandiles, and Sir Persant of Inde fought strongly, but namely Sir Pelleas, there might none withstand him ; and how they all fought till at the last they were laid to the earth ; and then the Queen made appointment for to save their lives, and go with Sir Meliagrance.

" Alas," said Sir Launcelot, " that most noble lady, that she should be so destroyed ; I had lever," said Sir Launcelot, " than all France, that I had been there well armed."

So when Sir Launcelot was armed and upon his horse, he prayed the child of the Queen's chamber to warn Sir Lavaine how suddenly he was departed, and for what cause. And pray him as he loveth me, that he will hie him after me, and that he stint not until he come to the castle where Sir Meliagrance abideth, or dwelleth ; " for there," said Sir Launcelot, " he shall hear of me an I am a man living, and rescue the Queen and the ten knights the which he traitorously hath taken, and that shall I prove upon his head, and all them that hold with him."

Then Sir Launcelot rode as fast as he might, and the book saith he took the water at Westminster Bridge, and made his horse to swim over Thames unto Lambeth. And then within a while he came to the same place thereas the ten noble knights fought with Sir Meliagrance. And then Sir Launcelot followed the track until that he came to a wood, and there was a straight way, and there the thirty archers bade Sir Launcelot turn again, and follow no longer that track.

" What commandment have ye thereto," said Sir Launcelot, " to cause me that am a knight of the Round Table to leave my right way ? "

"This way shalt thou leave, othereise thou shalt go it on thy foot, for wit thou well thy horse shall be slain."

"That is little mastery," said Sir Launcelot, "to slay mine horse; but as for myself, when my horse is slain, I give right nought for you, not an ye were five hundred more."

So then they shot Sir Launcelot's horse, and smote him with many arrows; and then Sir Launcelot avoided his horse, and went on foot; but there were so many ditches and hedges betwixt them and him that he might not meddle with none of them.

"Alas for shame," said Launcelot, "that ever one knight should betray another knight; but it is an old saw, A good man is never in danger but when he is in the danger of a coward."

Then Sir Launcelot went a while, and then he was foul cumbered of his armour, his shield, and his spear, and all that longed unto him. Wit ye well he was full sore annoyed, and full loath he was for to leave anything that longed unto him, for he dread sore the treason of Sir Meliagrance. Then by fortune there came by him a chariot that came thither for to fetch wood.

"Say me, carter," said Sir Launcelot, "what shall I give thee to suffer me to leap into thy chariot, and that thou bring me unto a castle within this two mile?"

"Thou shalt not come within my chariot," said the carter, "for I am sent for to fetch wood for my lord, Sir Meliagrance."

"With him would I speak."

"Thou shalt not go with me," said the carter.

Then Sir Launcelot leapt to him, and gave him such a buffet that he fell to the earth stark dead. Then the other carter, his fellow, was afeared, and weened to have gone the same way; and then he cried:

"Fair lord, save my life, and I shall bring you where ye will."

"Then I charge thee," said Sir Launcelot, "that thou drive me and this chariot even unto Sir Meliagrance's gate."

"Leap up into the chariot," said the carter, "and ye shall be there anon."

So the carter drove on a great wallop, and Sir Launcelot's horse followed the chariot, with more than a forty arrows broad and rough in him. And more than an hour and an half Dame Guenever was awaiting in a bay window with her ladies, and espied an armed knight standing in a chariot.

"See, madam," said a lady, "where rideth in a chariot a goodly armed knight; I suppose he rideth unto hanging."

"Where?" said the Queen.

Then she espied by his shield that he was there himself, Sir Launcelot du Lake. And then she was ware where came his horse

ever after that chariot, and ever he trod his 'guts and his paunch under his feet.

"Alas," said the Queen, "now I see well and prove, that well is him that hath a trusty friend. Ha, ha, most noble knight," said Queen Guenever, "I see well thou art hard bestad when thou ridest in a chariot."

Then she rebuked that lady that likened Sir Launcelot to ride in a chariot to hanging.

"It was foul mouthed," said the Queen, "and evil likened, so for to liken the most noble knight of the world unto such a shameful death. O Jesu defend him and keep him," said the Queen, "from all mischievous end."

By this was Sir Launcelot come to the gates of that castle, and there he descended down, and cried, that all the castle rang of it :

"Where art thou, false traitor, Sir Meliagrance, and knight of the Table Round ? now come forth here, thou traitor knight, thou and thy fellowship with thee ; for here I am, Sir Launcelot du Lake, that shall fight with you."

And therewithal he bare the gate wide open upon the porter, and smote him under his ear with his gauntlet, that his neck brast in sunder.

When Sir Meliagrance heard that Sir Launcelot was there he ran unto Queen Guenever, and fell upon his knee, and said :

"Mercy, madam, now I put me wholly into your grace."

"What aileth you now ?" said Queen Guenever ; "forsooth, I might well wit some good knight would revenge me though my lord Arthur wist not of this your work."

"Madam," said Sir Meliagrance, "all this that is amiss on my part shall be amended right as yourself will devise, and wholly I put me in your grace."

"What would ye that I did ?" said the Queen.

"I would no more," said Meliagrance, "but that ye would take all in your own hands, and that ye will rule my lord Sir Launcelot ; and such cheer as may be made him in this poor castle ye and he shall have until to-morn, and then may ye and all they return unto Westminster ; and my body and all that I have I shall put in your rule."

"Ye say well," said the Queen, "and better is peace than ever war, and the less noise the more is my worship."

Then the Queen and her ladies went down unto the knight, Sir Launcelot, that stood wroth out of measure in the inner court, to abide battle ; and ever he bade :

"Thou traitor knight come forth."

Then the Queen came to him and said :

"Sir Launcelot, why be ye so moved ?"

"Ha, madam," said Sir Launcelot, "why ask ye me that question? Meseemeth," said Sir Launcelot, "ye ought to be more wroth than I am, for ye have the hurt and the dishonour, for wit ye well, madam, my hurt is but little for the killing of a mare's son, but the despite grieveeth me much more than all my hurt."

"Truly," said the Queen, "ye say truth; but heartily I thank you," said the Queen, "but ye must come in with me peaceably, for all thing is put in my hand, and all that is evil shall be for the best, for the knight full sore repenteth him of the misadventure that is befallen him."

"Madam," said Sir Launcelot, "sith it is so that ye been accorded with him, as for me I may not be again it, howbeit Sir Meliagrance hath done full shamefully to me, and cowardly. Ah, madam," said Sir Launcelot, "an I had wist ye would have been so soon accorded with him I would not have made such haste unto you."

"Why say ye so," said the Queen, "do ye forthink yourself of your good deeds? Wit you well," said the Queen, "I accorded never unto him for favour nor love that I had unto him, but for to lay down every shameful noise."

"Madam," said Sir Launcelot, "ye understand full well I was never willing nor glad of shameful slander nor noise; and there is neither king, queen, nor knight, that beareth the life, except my lord King Arthur, and you, madam, should let me, but I should make Sir Meliagrance's heart full cold or ever I departed from hence."

"That wot I well," said the Queen, "but what will ye more? Ye shall have all thing ruled as ye list to have it."

"Madam," said Sir Launcelot, "so ye be pleased I care not, as for my part ye shall soon please."

Right so the Queen took Sir Launcelot by the bare hand, for he had put off his gauntlet, and so she went with him till her chamber; and then she commanded him to be unarmed. And then Sir Launcelot asked where were the ten knights that were wounded sore; so she showed them unto Sir Launcelot, and there they made great joy of the coming of him, and Sir Launcelot made great dole of their hurts, and bewailed them greatly. And there Sir Launcelot told them how cowardly and traitorly Meliagrance set archers to slay his horse, and how he was fain to put himself in a chariot. Thus they complained every each to other; and full fain they would have been revenged, but they peaced themselves by cause of the Queen.

Then, as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot was called many a day after le Chevalier du Chariot, and did many deeds, and great adventures he had. And so leave we of this tale le Chevalier du Chariot.

MEDIAEVAL FRENCH 12TH CENTURY

THE TALE OF KING COUSTANS THE EMPEROR

THE tale telleth us that there was crewhile an Emperor of Byzance, which as now is called Constantinople ; but anciently it was called Byzance. There was in the said city an Emperor ; pagan he was, and was held for wise as of his law. He knew well enough of a science that is called Astronomy, and he knew withal of the course of the stars, and the planets, and the moon : and he saw well in the stars many marvels, and he knew much of other things wherein the paynims much study, and in the lots they trow, and the answers of the Evil One, that is to say, the Enemy. This Emperor had to name Musselin ; he knew much of lore and of sorceries, as many a pagan doth even yet.

Now it befell on a time that the Emperor Musselin went his ways a night-tide, he and a Knight of his alone together, amidst of the city which is now called Constantinople, and the moon shone full clear.

And so far they went, till they heard a Christian woman who travailed in child-bed in a certain house whereby they went. There was the husband of the said woman aloft in a high solar, and was praying to God one while that she might be delivered, and then again another while that she might not be delivered.

When the Emperor had hearkened this a great while, he said to the Knight : " Hast thou heard it of yonder churl how he prayeth that his wife may be delivered of her child, and another while prayeth that she may not be delivered ? Certes, he is worser than a thief. For every man ought to have pity of women, more especially of them that be sick of childing. And now, so help me Mahoume and Termagaunt ! if I do not hang him, if he betake him not to telling me reason wherefore he doeth it ! Come we now unto him."

They went within, and said the Emperor : " Now, churl, tell me of a sooth wherefore thou prayedst thy God thus for thy wife, one

while that she might be delivered, and another while that she might be delivered not. This have I will to wot."

"Sir," said he, "I will tell thee well. Sooth it is that I be a clerk, and know much of a science which men call Astronomy. Withal I wot of the course of the stars and of the planets; therefore saw I well that if my wife were delivered at the point and the hour whereas I prayed God that she might not be delivered, that if she were delivered at that hour, the child would go the way of perdition, and that needs must he be burned, or hanged, or drowned. But whenas I saw that it was good hour and good point, then prayed I to God that she might be delivered. And so sore have I prayed God, that He hath hearkened my prayer of His mercy, and that she is delivered in good point. God be heried and thanked!"

"Tell me now," said the Emperor, "in what good point is the child born?"

"Sir," said he, "of a good will; know sir, forsooth, that this child, which here is born, shall have to wife the daughter of the Emperor of this city, who was born but scarce eight days ago; and he shall be Emperor withal, and lord of this city, and of all the earth."

"Churl," said the Emperor, "this which thou sayest can never come to pass."

"Sir," said he, "it is all sooth, and thus it behoveth it to be."

"Certes," quoth the Emperor, "'tis a mighty matter to trow in."

But the Emperor and the Knight departed thence, and the Emperor bade the Knight go bear off the child in such wise, if he might, that none should see him therein. The Knight went and found there two women, who were all busied in arraying the woman who had been brought to bed. The child was wrapped in linen clothes, and they had laid him on a chair. Thereto came the Knight, and took the child and laid him on a board, and brought him to the Emperor, in such wise that none of the women wotted thereof. The Emperor did do slit the belly of him with a knife from the breast down to the navel, and said withal to the Knight, that never should the son of that churl have to wife his daughter, nor be Emperor after him.

Therewithal would the Emperor do the Knight to put forth his hand to the belly, to seek out the heart; but the Knight said to him: "Ah, sir, a-God's mercy, what wouldst thou do? It is nought meet to thee, and if folk were to wot thereof, great reproach wouldst thou get thee. Let him be at this present, for he is more than dead. And if it please thee that that one trouble more about the matter, I will bear him down to the sea to drown him."

"Yea," quoth the Emperor, "bear him away thither, for right sore do I hate him."

So the Knight took the child, and wrapped him in a cover-point of silk, and bore him down toward the sea. But therewith had he pity of the child, and said that by him should he never be drowned; so he left him, all wrapped up as he was, on a midden before the gate of a certain abbey of monks, who at that very nick of time were singing their matins.

When the monks had done singing their matins, they heard the child crying, and they bore him before the Lord Abbot. And the Abbot saw that the child was fair, and said that he would do it to be nourished. Therewith he did do unwrap it, and saw that it had the belly cloven from the breast down to the navel.

The Abbot, so soon as it was day, bade come leeches, and asked of them for how much they would heal the child; and they craved for the healing of him an hundred of bezants. But he said that it would be more than enough, for overmuch would the child be costing. And so much did the Abbot, that he made market with the surgeons for four-score bezants. And thereafter the Abbot did do baptize the child, and gave him to name Coustans, because him-seemed that he costed exceeding much for the healing of him.

The leeches went so much about with the child, that he was made whole: and the Abbot sought him a good nurse, and got the child to suckle, and he was healed full soon; whereas the flesh of him was soft and tender, and grew together swiftly one to the other, but ever after showed the mark.

Much speedily waxed the child in great beauty; when he was seven years old the Abbot did him to go to the school, and he learned so well, that he over-passed all his fellows in subtilty and science. When he was of twelve years, he was a child exceeding goodly; so it might nought avail to seek a goodlier. And when as the Abbot saw him to be a child so goodly and gentle, he did him to ride abroad with him.

Now so it fell out, that the Abbot had to speak with the Emperor of a wrong which his bailiffs had done to the abbey. The Abbot made him a goodly gift, whereas the abbey and convent were subject unto him, for the Emperor was a Saracen. When the Abbot had given him his goodly gift, the Emperor gave him day for the third day thence, whenas he should be at a castle of his, three leagues from the city of Byzance.

The Abbot abode the day: when he saw the time at point to go to the Emperor, he mounted a-horseback, and his chaplain, and esquire, and his folk; and with him was Coustans, who was so well fashioned that all praised his great beauty, and each one said that

he seemed well to be come of high kindred, and that he would come to great good.

So when the Abbot was come before the castle whereas the Emperor should be, he came before him and spake to and greeted him, and the Emperor said to him that he should come into the castle, and he would speak with him of his matter: the Abbot made him obeisance, and said to him: "Sir, a-God's name!" Then the Abbot called to him Coustans, who was holding of his hat while he spake unto the Emperor; and the Emperor looked on the lad, and saw him so fair and gentle as never before had he seen the like fair person. So he asked of the Abbot what he was; and the Abbot said him that he wotted not, save that he was of his folk, and that he had bred him up from a little child. "And if I had leisure with thee, I would tell thee thereof fine marvels."

"Yea," said the Emperor; "come ye into the castle, and therein shalt thou say me the sooth."

The Emperor came into the castle, and the Abbot was ever beside him, as one who had his business to do; and he did it to the best that he might, as he who was subject unto him. The Emperor forgot in nowise the great beauty of the lad, and said unto the Abbot that he should cause him come before him, and the Abbot sent for the lad, who came straightway.

When the child was before the Emperor, he seemed unto him right fair; and he said unto the Abbot, that great damage it was that so fair a lad was Christian. But the Abbot said that it was great joy thereof, whereas he would render unto God a fair soul. When the Emperor heard that, he fell a-laughing, and said to the Abbot that the Christian law was of no account, and that all they were lost who trowed therein. When the Abbot heard him so say, he was sore grieved; but he durst not make answer as he would, so he said much humbly: "Sir, if God please, who can all things, they are not lost; for God will have mercy of His sinners."

Then the Emperor asked of him whence that fair child was come; and the Abbot said that it was fifteen years gone since he had been found before their gate, on a midden, all of a night-tide. "And our monks heard him a-crying whenas they had but just said matins; and they went to seek the child, and brought him to me; and I looked on the babe, and beheld him much fair, and I said that I would do him to be nourished and baptized. I unwrapped him, for the babe was wrapped up in a cover-point of vermil sendel; and when he was unwrapped, I saw that he had the belly slit from the breast to the navel. Then I sent for leeches and surgeons, and made market with them to heal him for four-

score bezants ; and thereafter he was baptized, and I gave him to name Coustans, because he costed so much of goods to heal. So was the babe presently made whole : but never sithence might it be that the mark appeared not on his belly."

When the Emperor heard that, he knew that it was the child whose belly he had slit to draw the heart out of him. So he said to the Abbot that he should give him the lad. And the Abbot said that he would speak thereof to his convent, and that he should have him with their good-will. The Emperor held his peace, and answered never a word. But the Abbot took leave of him, and came to his abbey, and his monks, and told them that the Emperor had craved Coustans of him. " But I answered that I would speak to you if ye will yea-say it. Say, now, what ye would praise of my doing herein."

" What ! " said the wisest of the convent ; " by our faith, evil hast thou done, whereas thou gavest him not presently, even as he demanded of thee. We counsel thee send him straightway, lest the Emperor be wrath against us, for speedily may we have scathe of him."

Thereto was their counsel fast, that Coustans should be sent to the Emperor. So the Abbot commanded the Prior to lead Coustans thereto ; and the Prior said : " A-God's name ! "

So he mounted, and led with him Coustans, and came unto the Emperor, and greeted him on behalf of the Abbot and the convent ; and then he took Coustans by the hand, and, on the said behalf, gave him to the Emperor, who received him as one who was much wrath that such a runagate and beggar churl should have his daughter to wife. But he thought in his heart that he would play him the turn.

When the Emperor had gotten Coustans, he was in sore imagination how he should be slain in such wise that none might wot word thereof. And it fell out so that the Emperor had matters on hand at the outer marches of his land, much long aloof thence, well a twelve days' journey. So the Emperor betook him to going thither, and had Coustans thither with him, and thought what wise he might to do slay him, till at last he let write a letter to his Burgreve of Byzance.

" I, Emperor of Byzance and Lord of Greece, do thee to wit who abidest duly in my place for the warding of my land ; and so soon as thou seest this letter thou shalt slay or let slay him who this letter shall bear to thee, so soon as he hath delivered the said letter to thee, without longer tarrying. As thou holdest dear thine own proper body, do straightway my commandment herein."

Even such was the letter, which the fair child Coustans bore, and

knew not that he bore his own death. The lad took the letter, which was close, and betook him to the road, and did so much by his journeys that he came in less time than fifteen days to Byzance, which is nowadays called Constantinople.

When the lad entered into the city, it was the hour of dinner ; so, as God would have it, he thought that he would not go his errand at that nick of time, but would tarry till folk had done dinner : and exceeding hot was the weather, as is wont about St. John's-mass. So he entered into the garden all a-horseback. Great and long was the garden ; so the lad took the bridle from off his horse and unlaced the saddle-girths, and let him graze ; and thereafter he went into the nook of a tree ; and full pleasant was the place, so that presently he fell asleep.

Now so it fell out, that when the fair daughter of the Emperor had eaten, she went into the garden with three of her maidens ; and they fell to chasing each other about, as whiles is the wont of maidens to play ; until at the last the fair Emperor's daughter came under the tree whereas Coustans lay a-sleeping, and he was all vermil as the rose. And when the damsel saw him, she beheld him with a right good will, and she said to herself that never on a day had she seen so fair a fashion of man. Then she called to her that one of her fellows in whom she had the most affiance, and the others she made to go forth from out of the garden.

Then the fair maiden, daughter of the Emperor, took her fellow by the hand, and led her to look on the lovely lad whereas he lay a-sleeping ; and she spake thus : " Fair fellow, here is a rich treasure. Lo thou ! the most fairest fashion of a man that ever mine eyes have seen on any day of my life. And he beareth a letter, and well I would see what it sayeth."

So the two maidens drew nigh to the lad, and took from him the letter, and the daughter of the Emperor read the same ; and when she had read it, she fell a-lamenting full sore, and said to her fellow : " Certes here is a great grief ! "

" Ha, my Lady ! " said the other one, " tell me what it is."

" Of a surety," said the Maiden, " might I but trow in thee I would do away that sorrow ! "

" Ha, Lady," said she, " hardly mayest thou trow in me, whereas for nought would I uncover that thing which thou wouldst have hid."

Then the Maiden, the daughter of the Emperor, took oath of her according to the paynim law ; and thereafter she told her what the letter said ; and the damsel answered her : " Lady, and what wouldest thou do ? "

" I will tell thee well," said the daughter of the Emperor ; " I will put in his pouch another letter, whereip the Emperor, my father,

biddeth his Burgreve to give me to wife to this fair child here, and that he make great feast at the doing of the wedding unto all the folk of this land ; whereas he is to wot well that the lad is a high man and a loyal."

When the damsel had heard that, she said that would be good to do. " But, Lady, how wilt thou have the seal of thy father ? "

" Full well," said the Maiden, " for my father delivered to me four pair of scrolls, sealed of his seal thereon ; he hath written nought therein ; and I will write all that I will."

" Lady," said she, " thou hast said full well ; but do it speedily, and haste thee ere he awakeneth."

" So will I," said the Maiden.

Then the fair Maiden, the daughter of the Emperor, went to her coffers, and drew thereout one of the said scrolls sealed, which her father had left her, that she might borrow moneys thereby, if so she would. For ever was the Emperor and his folk in war, whereas he had neighbours right felon, and exceeding mighty, whose land marched upon his. So the Maiden wrote the letter in this wise :

" I, King Musselin, Emperor of Greece and of Byzance the city, to my Burgreve of Byzance greeting. I command thee that the bearer of this letter ye give to my fair daughter in marriage according to our law ; whereas I have heard and wot soothly that he is a high person, and well worthy to have my daughter. And thereto make ye great joy and great feast to all them of my city and of all my land."

In such wise wrote and said the letter of the fair daughter of the Emperor ; and when she had written the said letter, she went back to the garden, she and her fellow together, and found that one yet asleep, and they put the letter into his pouch. And then they began to sing and make noise to awaken him. So he awoke anon, and was all astonished at the fair Maiden, the daughter of the Emperor, and the other one her fellow, who came before him ; and the fair Maiden, daughter of the Emperor, greeted him ; and he greeted her again right debonairly. Then she asked of him what he was, and whither he went ; and he said that he bore a letter to the Burgreve, which the Emperor sent by him ; and the Maiden said that she would bring him straightway whereas was the Burgreve. Therewith she took him by the hand, and brought him to the palace, where there was much folk, who all rose against the Maiden, as to her who was their Lady.

Now the Maiden demanded the Burgreve, and they told her that he was in a chamber ; so thither she led the lad, and the lad delivered the letter, and said that the Emperor greeted him. But the Burgreve made great joy of the lad, and kissed the hand of him. The

Maiden opened the pouch, and fell a-kissing the letter and the seal of her father for joy's sake, whereas she had not heard tidings of him a great while.

Thereafter she said to the Burgreve that she would hearken the letter in privy council, even as if she wotted nought thereof; and the Burgreve said that that were good to do. Then went the Burgreve and the Maiden into a chamber, and the Maiden unfolded the letter and read it to the Burgreve, and made semblance of wondering exceedingly; and the Burgreve said to her:

"Lady, it behoveth to do the will of my lord thy father, for otherwise we shall be blamed exceedingly."

The Maiden answered him: "And how can this be, that I should be wedded without my lord my father? A strange thing it would be, and I will do it in no manner."

"Ha, Lady!" said the Burgreve, "what is that thou sayest? Thy father has bidden thus by his letter, and it behoveth not to gainsay."

"Sir," said the Maiden (unto whom it was late till the thing were done), "thou shalt speak unto the barons and mighty men of this realm, and take counsel thereof. And if they be of accord thereto, I am she who will not go against it." Then the Burgreve said that she spake well and as one wise.

Then spake the Burgreve to the barons, and showed them the letter, and they accorded all to that that the matter of the letter must be accomplished, and the will of the Emperor done. Then they wedded the fair youth Coustans, according to the paynim law, unto the fair daughter of the Emperor; and the wedding endured for fifteen days: and such great joy was there at Byzance that it was exceeding, and folk did not work in the city, save eating and drinking and making merry.

Long while abode the Emperor in the land whereas he was; and when he had done his business, he went his ways back towards Byzance; and whenas he was but anigh two journeys thence, came to him a message of the messengers who came from Byzance. The Emperor asked of him what they did in the city; and the varlet said that they were making exceeding good cheer of eating and drinking and taking their ease, and that no work had they done therein these fifteen days.

"And wherefore is that?" said the Emperor.

"Wherefore, Sir! Wot ye not well thereof?"

"Nay, forsooth," said the Emperor, "but tell me wherefore."

"Sir," said the varlet, "thou sentest a youngling, exceeding fair, to thy Burgreve, and badest him by thy letter to wed him to thy daughter the fair, and that he should be Emperor after thee, whereas he was a man right high, and well worthy to have her. But thy

daughter would not take that before that the Burgreve should have spoken to the barons. And he spake to all them, and showed them thy letter; and they said that it behoved to do thy commandment. And when thy daughter saw that they were all of one accord thereon, she durst not go against them, but yea-said it. Even in such wise hath thy daughter been wedded, and such joy has been in the city as none might wish it better."

The Emperor, when he heard the messenger speak thus, was all astonied, and thought much of this matter; and he asked of the varlet how long it was since the lad had wedded his daughter, and whether or no he had lain by her?

"Sir," said the varlet, "yea; and she may well be big by now; because it is more than three weeks since he hath wedded her."

"Forsooth," said the Emperor, "in a good hour be it! for since it is so, it behoveth me to abide it, since no other it may be."

So far rode the Emperor till he came to Byzance, whereas they made him much fair feast; and his fair daughter came to meet him, and her husband Coustans, who was so fair a child that none might better be. The Emperor, who was a wise man, made of them much great joy, and laid his two hands upon their two heads, and held them there a great while; which is the manner of benison amongst paynims.

That night thought the Emperor much on this marvel, how it could have come about; and so much he pondered it, that he wotted full well that it had been because of his daughter. So he had no will to gainsay her, but he demanded to see the letter which he had sent, and they showed it unto him, and he saw his seal hanging thereto, and saw the letter which was written; and by the manner whereby the thing had been done, he said to himself that he had striven against the things which behoved to be.

Thereafter, the Emperor made Coustans a knight, even his new son who was wedded unto his daughter, and he gave and granted to him all the whole land after his death. And the said Coustans bore him well and wisely, as a good knight, and a valiant and hardy, and defended him full well against his enemies. No long time wore ere his lord the Emperor died, and his service was done much richly, after the paynim law. Then was Coustans Emperor, and he loved and honoured much the Abbot who had nourished him, and he made him his very master. And the Emperor Coustans, by the counsel of the Abbot, and the will of God the all mighty, did do christen his wife, and all they of that land were converted to the law of Jesus Christ. And the Emperor Coustans begot on his wife an heir male, who had to name Constantine, who was thereafter a prudhomme

much great. And thereafter was the city called Constantinople, because of his father, Coustans, who costed so much, but aforetime was it called Byzance.

Here withal endeth the Story of King Coustans the Emperour.

The said story was done out of the ancient French into English by William Morris.

OLD ANTIF, 1280 A.D. MEDIAEVAL FRENCH

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

" Hear a tale of joy and grief
By the minstrel Old Antif,
Telling how two lovers met,
Aucassin and Nicolette,
And the dolours undergone,
And the deeds of prowess done
By a lad of noble race
For a lady fair of face !

" Sweet is the tale and finely told.
Though a man be ill and old,
Sick of body, sad of mind,
And to moody thought inclined,
If he hear it, he shall be
Healed and filled with jollity.
It is so sweet ! "

So great, so marvellous, and so mortal was the war Count Bougars of Valence made on Count Garin of Beaucaire, that never a day broke but there were a hundred knights and ten thousand men-at-arms, foot and horse, at the gates and walls and barriers of the town. He burnt and wasted his lands and killed his men.

Count Garin of Beaucaire was old and feeble and at the end of his life. He had no heir, son or daughter, but one boy. The young man was such as I shall tell you. Aucassin was his name : tall, handsome, and charming he was, with well-shaped legs and feet and body and arms. His fair hair fell in little curls, his eyes were laughing and sparkling, his face a bright oval, with a high well-cut nose. And so full was he of good qualities, there was no room for anything bad in him. But Love, who conquers all, had so taken him captive that he would not become a knight, or put on armour, or ride to tourney or do any of his duties.

" Son," said his father and mother, " arm and mount your horse, and defend your lands and help your men. If they see you among themselves, they will fight the better for their own lives and goods, and for your lands and mipe."

"Father," said Aucassin, "how can you talk only about this matter. May God never grant me anything I pray for, if I become knight, or mount horse, or ride forth to battle to slay or to be slain, without you give me Nicolette, my sweetheart, whom I love so much!"

"Son," said the father, "this cannot be! You must let Nicolette alone. She is only a captive brought from a strange land, and purchased by the Viscount of my town from the Saracens. He has led her here and brought her up, and baptized her, and made her his god-child; and one of these days he will give her to some young fellow who will keep her in food in an honourable way. With all this you have nothing to do. But if you want a wife I will give you the daughter of a count or a king. There is no man so great in France but that if you want his daughter to wife, you shall have her."

"Oh, father!" said Aucassin, "where is there on earth so high a seat of honour that Nicolette, my sweetest love, would not worthily fill? Were she Empress of Constantinople or Germany, or Queen of France or England it would be very little for her. So noble is she and courtly, and of good race, and endowed with all fine qualities."

"Of the castle of Beaucaire
Gallant Aucassin was heir;
And no power or pleading moved him
To desert the maid that loved him;
Though his father looked full grim,
And his mother threatened him:
'Go to, fool! How can you rave
For a pretty, wanton slave,
Cast from a heathen town in Spain
And sold by pagan sailormen?
Since you want to take a wife,
Choose a girl of noble life!'
'Mother, on this my mind is set—
Nobly born is Nicolette,
Lovely and sweet in every part;
Her beauty lights up all my heart.
Good it is to win such bliss,
So sweet she is!'"

When Count Garin of Beaucaire saw that he could not draw Aucassin away from his love Nicolette, he went to the Viscount of the town, who was his vassal, and spoke to him:

"Sir Viscount, take away your god-child, Nicolette. Cursed be the land from which she was brought into our country! For through her am I losing Aucassin. He will not become a knight or do any

of his duties. And take heed of this thing—If I catch the girl I will burn her at the stake, and you yourself will be in fear of your life ! ”

“ Sir,” said the Viscount, “ it pains me to see that he comes and goes here, and talks with her. I have purchased Nicolette with my money, and brought her up and baptized her, and one of these days I shall give her to a young man who can win food for her in an honourable way. With all this your son Aucassin has nothing to do. But since it is your will and pleasure, I will send her far away so that he shall never see her again.”

“ Look well to it,” said Count Garin. “ Great troubles may happen to you over this matter ! ”

He went away. The Viscount was a very powerful man in the town, and he had a splendid palace by the side of a garden. In a chamber on a top story he imprisoned Nicolette, with an old woman to keep her company ; and he sent them the bread, meat, wine, and other things they needed. Then he had the door sealed, so that no one could go in or out ; and there was only a very small window overlooking the garden, through which a little fresh air came.

“ In the vault where Nicolette
Prisoned is, may no one get.
Pleasant is the place to see,
Carved and painted wondrously ;
But no pleasure can she find
In the room, for grief of mind.
Look ! for she is leaning still
From the marble window-sill !
Delicate brows and yellow hair
She has, and delicately fair
Her face is, and no man can see
On earth a lovelier thing than she.
In the woodland far below
She can see the roses blow,
And the pretty birds that sing,
While she is reft of everything.
' Ah me ! Poor slave ! ' she cries. ' Ah me !
Why should I a prisoner be ?
Aucassin ! My lord ! My knight !
Heart's desire, and eyes' delight !
Because you do not hate me, I
In a prison cell must lie,
All with grief and pain fordone.
But, by God, sweet Mary's Son,
Here for long I will not stay ;
Love shall find a way.' ”

The rumour went through all the land that Nicolette was lost. Some said she had fled from the country, and others said that Count

Garin of Beaucaire had had her put to death. If there was a man who had joy in the news, Aucassin was not that man ; and he went to the Viscount of the town, and spoke to him.

" Sir Viscount ! What have you done with Nicolette, my sweetest sweetheart, the thing I love most in the whole world ? Have you stolen her away from me and hidden her ? You must know well that if I die through it, my blood will be required of you, and justly so. For you will have slain me with your two hands, by stealing from me the one thing in this world that I love most."

" Fair sir," said the Viscount, " let this matter be ! Nicolette is a slave brought by me from a strange land, and purchased with my own money from the Saracens. I have brought her up, and baptized her, and made her my god-child, and fed her, and one of these days I will give her to some young fellow who will keep her in an honourable way. With all this you have nothing to do, but to take to wife the daughter of a count or of a king. Moreover, what would you have won, had you made her your mistress and taken her to your bed ? Very little would you have gained by it ; for all the days of your life your body would have been dishonoured, and afterwards your soul would have gone to hell, and never would you have entered heaven ! "

" What have I to do in heaven ? " said Aucassin. " I have no desire to enter it ; but only to have Nicolette, my very sweet love, whom I long for so much. For into heaven there go only such folk as I will tell you. There go old priests and maimed, old cripples who squat all day and all night before altars and in crypts : those who wear worn-out mantles and old tattered garments : those go who are naked, with bare feet and with bare rumps, who are dying of hunger and thirst, and cold and wretchedness. These are the folk that go to heaven, and with such as them have I nothing to do ! But to hell gladly will I go. For to hell go the handsome clerks and the gallant knights who are slain in the tourneys and the splendid wars, and the good squires and the men of noble birth. And with them I desire to go. And to hell go the lovely, courteous ladies, who have two or three lovers besides their husbands, and there go our gold and our silver, our ermine and our furs, and the harpers and the minstrels and the kings of our age. Gladly with them will I go, if only I have Nicolette, my sweetest love, with me ! "

" Faith ! " said the Viscount, " all your talk is in vain, and never shall you see the girl. And if I spoke to you about her and your father knew of it, he would burn me and her in a fire, and your own life too would be in peril."

" This gives me great pain," said Aucassin, and very sorrowfully he left the Viscount.

"Sadly Aucassin departs,
 With the heaviest of hearts.
 Strength or solace finds he none,
 Now that Nicolette is gone.
 Sadly homeward he repairs,
 Sadly mounts the castle stairs
 To his chamber, where he lies
 Weeping, and on his love he cries :
 ' Sweet wert thou, my Nicolette,
 In all thy movements ! Sweeter yet
 In laughing talk and loving ways !
 Sweetest to kiss and to embrace !
 Now I am so sorely tried,
 I care not if to-day I died,
 For then would all my sorrows end,
 Sister, sweet friend ! ' "

While Aucassin was in his chamber, sorrowing for his sweetheart Nicolette, Count Bougars of Valence did not forget that he had to bring his war to an end. So he called out his men, foot and horse, and drew up to the castle to assail it. And the cries and rumours spread ; knights and squires armed themselves and sought the gates and the walls to defend the castle, the townsmen climbed to the galleries of the ramparts and flung paving-stones and sharpened stakes upon the assailers.

While the assault was spreading all around and growing very fierce, Count Garin of Beaucaire came into the room where Aucassin was grieving and bewailing Nicolette, his sweetest darling, whom he loved so much.

"Ha, my son !" said he. "What a coward and miserable creature you are to look on, when an enemy is storming your best and strongest castle ! If you lose it, you are a ruined man ! Son, take your arms and mount your horse, and defend your lands and help your men. Go forth to the battle. You need not even strike or be struck. If only our vassals see you among them, they will fight better for their own lives and goods, and for your lands and mine. And you are so tall and so strong, you could easily do this thing, and it is your duty to do it."

"Father," said Aucassin, "how can you talk only about this one matter. May God never grant me anything I pray for, if I become knight or mount horse and go forth to battle to slay or be slain, without you give me Nicolette, my sweetheart, whom I love so much !"

"Son," said the father, "that cannot be. Rather would I endure to be wholly ruined and lose everything I have, than that you should take her for your mistress or your wife."

He turned away, and when Aucassin saw him going, he called him back.

"Father!" said Aucassin. "Come, I will make a good bargain with you."

"What, fair son?"

"I will arm myself and go into the fight on one condition. If God bring me back safe and sound, you will let me see Nicolette, my sweet darling, long enough to speak two or three words to her, and give her one kiss."

"I agree," said the father.

So he made the bargain, and Aucassin was joyful.

"A hundred thousand pounds of gold
Would not make a man more bold
Than was Aucassin to get
One sweet kiss from Nicolette.
Shouting for his armour, he
Dons his hauberk joyfully;
Laces a helm upon his head;
Girds on his sword; bestrides his steed;
Couches his lance, and grips his shield;
Gallantly he takes the field
Calling his sweetheart to his mind,
He spurs his horse, and, like the wind,
Sweeps through the town-gate, and his foes
Around him close"

Aucassin was armed and horsed as you have heard. God! how he sat—the shield on his neck, the helm on his head, and the sword-belt on his left hip! The lad was tall and strong, handsome and charming, and very powerful; the horse on which he sat was fleet and mettlesome, and the boy put him skilfully through the gate. But do not fancy that he was thinking of taking spoil of oxen, cows and goats, or of striking down his enemies or being struck down by them. Not at all! It never came into his mind; for he thought so much on Nicolette, his sweet darling, that he forgot his reins, and all that he had to do. And his horse, still smarting from the spur, carried him into the thick of the fight, and dashed him into the midst of his foes. And on all sides they man-handled him, and wrested his shield and lance from him, and quickly led him a prisoner, and began to discuss in what way they should put him to death.

"Ha, God!" said Aucassin, when he overheard them. "Sweet Jesus! Are these my mortal enemies, who hale me about and talk of cutting off my head forthwith? But if I get my head struck off I shall never speak again to my sweetheart Nicolette, whom I love so much. Yet here am I still with a good sword, sitting on a fresh horse. If I do not protect myself now for her sake, may God never help her if she goes on loving me!"

The lad was big and strong, and the horse beneath him was eager ; and putting his hand to his sword, he began to strike out, left and right, and slash through helms and nose-guards, hands and arms—making such a carnage round him as a wild boar does when he stands at bay before the dogs in a forest. He struck down ten knights and wounded seven more, and then charged suddenly out of the crowd of foes, riding back full gallop, sword in hand.

Count Bougars of Valence heard that his men were about to hang Aucassin, his enemy, and he came to the spot and Aucassin did not overlook him. Gripping his sword, he smote him right through the helm, and battered in his head. He was so stunned that he tumbled to the earth, and Aucassin stretched out his hand, and seized him by the nose-guard, and led him a prisoner to his father.

" Father," said Aucassin, " see, here is your enemy who has warred against you so long and done you so much evil ! Twenty years has this war lasted, and no man could bring it to an end ! "

" Fair son," said the father, " it is well you have done your first deeds of knightly courage, and given over dreaming of foolish things ! "

" Father," said Aucassin, " don't start lecturing me, but let me have my part of the bargain we made. "

" Bah ! what bargain, fair son ? "

" Oh, father ! have you forgotten your promise ? By my head I do not mean to forget it, whoever else does, so deeply it goes to my heart. Did you not bargain with me, when I took my arms and went out to the fight, that, if God brought me back safe and sound, you would let me see my sweetheart, Nicolette, long enough for me to speak two or three words to her and give her one kiss ? This was the bargain you made with me, and I wish you to keep it ! "

" I keep it ? " said his father. " May God never help me if I keep such a bargain with you. If the girl were here now I would burn her in a fire, and you yourself might not escape it ! "

" Is that all you have to say ? " said Aucassin.

" So help me God," said his father, " yes ! "

" Faith ! " said Aucassin, " I am very sorry that a man of your age should be a liar. Count of Valence, you are my prisoner ? "

" That is so, sir," said Count Bougars.

" Then give me your hand," said Aucassin.

" Willingly, sir. "

So he put his hand in the lad's.

" This pledge shall you make me," said Aucassin, " that never, in all the days that you have to live, shall it be within your power to bring shame on my father, or injure him in body or goods, and you will not do it ! "

"For God's sake, sir," said the Count, "do not mock me, but set me to ransom. There is nothing you can ask me—gold or silver, war-horses or palfreys, ermines or sables, hounds or hawks—that I will not give you."

"What!" said Aucassin. "Do you not know that I took you prisoner?"

"Yes, sir," said Count Bougars.

"So help me God, then," said Aucassin, "if you will not give me that pledge I will send your head flying from your shoulders!"

"God's name!" he said. "I'll give any pledge you please!"

So he pledged him, and Aucassin set him on a horse and mounted another, and conducted him to a place of safety.

"Seeing that his only son,
Aucassin, could not be won
From Nicolette, the bright-faced maid,
Count Garin was sore dismayed;
And in anger had him thrown
In a dungeon of grey stone
Under the ground; and there the lad
For lonely grief went well-nigh mad
Listen, and you will hear him cry,
Like a man about to die:
'Nicolette of the bright face,
Lily of love and rose of grace!
Sweeter than grapes my sweetheart is,
Or wine in carven chalices!
It was but the other day
That a pilgrim came this way—
Weak and poor and travel-worn—
Who in Limousin was born
With the falling sickness, he
Stricken was full grievously,
Full of pain and well-nigh dead,
When you passed before his bed
Lifting your train and ermine gown
And smock, your fair, white leg was shown,
And the pilgrim, seeing it,
Rose up from his deadly fit—
Rose up cured of all disease,
And went home joyful and at ease!
Wonder of the world! I will
Worship you and praise you still,
For the beauty of your face,
For the joy of your embrace,
For the rapture of your kiss,
And your body's sweetnesses!
For you am I in prison bound,
In this dungeon underground:
Where I rage in such mad fear,
I must die in darkness here,
For you, my dear '" "

Aucassin was put in prison as you have heard, and Nicolette, on the other hand, was shut in a vaulted chamber. It was in the summertime, in the month of May when the days are warm, long, and bright, and the nights quiet and serene. Nicolette lay one night in her bed, and saw the moon shine white through the window, and heard the nightingale sing in the garden below, and she thought on Aucassin, her friend, whom she loved so much. Then she fell to thinking of Count Garin of Beaucaire, who hated her to death, and she thought she would not remain any longer there ; since if she were betrayed, and Count Garin learnt where she was, he would put her to death in a terrible way. She touched the old woman who was with her, and found she was asleep. She rose up and put on a fine mantle of cloth of silk, and took the bed-clothes and the towels and tied them together, and made as long a rope as she was able, and fastened it to the pillar of the window, and so lowered herself into the garden. Then lifting her mantle, with one hand in front and the other behind, she kilted it, because she saw that the dew was heavy on the grass. And so she went down the garden.

Her yellow hair fell in little curls ; her eyes were blue and laughing ; and her face finely curved, with a proud, shapely little nose ; her little lips were more tenderly red than cherries and roses are in summertime ; her teeth were white and small ; and her firm little breasts swelled beneath her mantle like two nuts of a walnut-tree. So slim was her waist that you could have clipped her in your two hands ; and the daisies that snapped beneath her toes as she passed, and fell on the arch of her foot, looked quite black beside her feet and legs. So very white the maiden was.

She reached the postern gate, and, unfastening it, passed out into the streets of Beaucaire, keeping on the shadowy side : for the moon was shining very bright ; and she wandered on until she came to the tower where her lover was imprisoned. The tower was cracked here and there, and she crouched against one of the buttresses, and wrapped her mantle about her, and put her head through one of the cracks in the old ruin ; and there she heard Aucassin within, weeping and making great sorrow, and lamenting for his sweet darling whom he loved so much. And when she had listened enough to him, she began to speak.

“ Leaning on a moonlit pier,
 Lovely Nicolette could hear
 Aucassin, in his dark cell,
 Weep for her he loved too well,
 And desire her love again.
 So she spoke him frank and plain :
 ‘ Aucassin, young, valiant knight,
 Born to honour and delight !

All in vain you weep for me,
Since betrothed we cannot be ;
For your kinsmen hate me sore,
And your father hates me more.
For your sake I now must flee
To some land across the sea.
Cutting off a lock of hair,
She cast it through the window, where
Her lover took the yellow tress
To kiss and fondle it and press
Close to his sad and loving heart ;
And weeping still he would not part
From his sweetheart."

When Aucassin heard Nicolette say that she wished to go away to another country, he was very angry.

" Sweet, lovely friend," he said, " you must not go away ; for if you do, you will kill me. The first man who set eyes on you and had the power, would at once seize you, and put you in his bed, and make you his mistress. And if you lay in any man's bed but mine, do not think I should wait till I found a knife to stab myself to the heart and die. No, no ! I would not wait so long as that. I would just fling myself against the first wall or grey stone, and beat my head till I knocked my eyes out and my brains. Sooner would I die such a death than learn you had been in any other man's bed but mine ! "

" Ah ! " she said, " I do not believe you love me as much as you say. I love you more than you love me ! "

" Oh, my sweet, lovely darling," said Aucassin, " it is not possible you should love me as much as I love you. Woman cannot love man as much as man does woman. For the love of a woman lies in her eye, and in the nipple of her breast, and in the toe of her foot ; but the love of a man is planted in his heart, and from there it cannot escape ! "

While Aucassin and Nicolette were talking together, the town watch came along the street with their drawn swords under their cloaks. For Count Garin had ordered them to put the girl to death as soon as ever they took her. And the watchman on the tower saw them coming, and heard them talking of Nicolette and threatening to kill her.

" God ! " he said, " what a great pity it would be if they slew so lovely a maid ! It would be a mighty good piece of work if I could tell her without them knowing it, so that she could guard herself against them. For, if they kill her, my young lord Aucassin will die of it, and that will be a great pity."

•
" Wise the watchman was, and brave,
Kind to warn and quick to save !

Making up a merry tune,
 Loud he sang beneath the moon :
 ' Lassie with the noble heart,
 Winsome form and winning art,
 Grey-blue eyes and yellow hair,
 Talking with your lover there—
 I can see you where you stand !
 Listen now and understand !
 Run from the soldiers ! Run ! for they
 Quickly come along this way.
 With bare swords they seek you out,
 Fiercely searching round about.
 Great the hurt that will betide you !
 So hide you ! hide you ! "

" Ha ! " said Nicolette. " May the soul of your father and your mother rest in blessed peace for the kindness and courtesy you have shown me ! Please God I shall escape from them, and may God Himself be my guard ! "

Wrapping herself in her mantle, she stayed in the shadow of the buttress until the men had passed, and then she took leave of Aucassin, and ran till she came to the castle wall. There was a breach in the rampart that had been repaired with wattles and earth, and she climbed over this, and got between the wall and the ditch, and looking down she saw that the ditch fell sheer and deep, and she was mightily afraid.

" Ha, sweet God ! " she said, " if I let myself fall I shall break my neck ; if I stay here they will take me to-morrow and burn me in a fire. Yet would I rather die here now than have the people staring at me at the stake to-morrow ! "

She crossed herself, and let herself slip down the ditch, and when she came to the bottom, her lovely feet and her lovely hands, that had not known what wounds were, were bruised and skinned, and the blood spurted from them in a dozen places. Yet she felt neither hurt nor pain, because of the terror she was in. And if she was hurt in getting into the ditch, she was still more hurt in getting out of it. But she thought it would do her no good to linger there, and finding a sharpened stake that the townsmen had thrown when defending the castle, she hacked out steps, one above the other, and climbed with great difficulty till she reached the top.

Now, two bow-shots away was the forest, that stretched thirty leagues in length and breadth, and within it were wild beasts and deadly snakes. She was afraid they would kill her if she went in the forest. But then she remembered that if she were found by the ramparts, she would be taken back to the town to be burnt.

" Nicolette of the bright face,
 Climbing from the perilous place,

Began to cry in bitter fear
And fall on Christ to succour her :
' Father, King of majesty !
I cannot tell what way to flee !
In the leafy forest I
By lion or wild boar will die.
Here, if I bide till morning break,
Men will lead me to the stake,
And to the fire shall I be doomed,
And all my body be consumed.
Yet, by the majesty of God,
Rather will I be wild beasts' food
Than by the city stay and burn !
Back I'll not turn ! ' "

Nicolette cried sorely as you have heard. Then commending herself to God she wandered on till she came into the forest. But she was afraid to enter the deep wood, because of the wild beasts and the snakes, and she crept into a thick bush, and there sleep fell upon her. And she slept till the morrow at high prime, when the herd-boys came from the town, and drove their beasts between the wood and the river. And they turned aside to a very beautiful spring that rose on the edge of the forest, and there they spread out a cloak, and put their bread on it. While they were eating, Nicolette was awakened by the songs of the birds and the shouts of the herd-boys, and she sprang towards them.

" Fair children ! " said she, " may the Lord God help you ! "

" God bless you ! " said one who was readier of speech than the others.

" Good boys," she said, " do you know Aucassin, the son of Count Garin of Beaucaire ? "

" Yes, we know him well."

" So God help you, good boys ! " she said, " tell him that there is a beast in this forest, and that he must come and hunt it down. And if he can capture it, he will not give a limb of it for a hundred pounds of gold ! No, not for five hundred pounds or for any wealth ! "

And the herd-boys stared at her ; and when they saw how lovely she was, they were amazed.

" How can I tell Aucassin that ? " said the boy who was readier of speech than the others. " God's curse on him who shall carry such a tale ! It is some ghastly thing you speak about. For there is no beast of price in this forest—stag, lion, or wild boar—with a limb worth more than twopence or threepence at the most. Yet you speak of such great wealth ! God's curse on him who believes you, or carries your tale. You are a fairy woman, and we do not want your company ! So keep your own ways."

"Ha ! good boys," said she, "this thing you must do. The beast has such a medicine that it will cure Aucassin of all his sickness. And I have five shillings in my purse, and you can take them if you will give him my message. Within three days must he set out on the hunt, and if in three days he does not find the beast, never shall any one see him cured of his sickness."

"My faith !" said the herd-boy, "we will take the money, and if he comes by this spring we will tell him ; but we cannot go searching for him."

"In God's name !" she said. Then she took leave of the herd-boys, and went away.

"Leaving the herd-boys by the spring,
Nicolette went wandering
Through the deep foliage, till she stood
Right in the middle of the wood,
Where the track branched out in a maze
Of seven long, dim forest ways.
And there she thought to try her love
And see how faithful he would prove.
So with lily and heather flower
And boughs, she built a bonny bower—
A bonnier bower was never seen !
'By God !' she said, 'if Aucassin
Come this way, and will not rest,
For love's sake, in my flowery nest,
He shall not have my lips to kiss,
Nor I have his !'"

As you have heard, Nicolette made her bower very pretty and very dainty, and lined it without and within with flowers and foliage ; and then she lay down under a thick bush close by, to see what Aucassin would do.

And the rumour spread through all the country that Nicolette was lost. Some said she had fled, and others said that Count Garin had put her to death. If any man was pleased with the news, Aucassin was not that man. His father, Count Garin, took him from the prison, and called out the knights of the land and the young ladies, and held a right splendid feast, thinking to comfort his son, Aucassin, thereby. But when the feasting was at its height, there was Aucassin leaning against the balcony, all sorrowful and downcast. Amid all the merry-making, Aucassin had no wish for it : since he saw there nothing of the one thing he loved. A knight looked at him for a while, and came up to him and spoke.

"Aucassin," said he, "in my time I have been ill of the same malady that troubles you. If you will trust me, I will give you some good advice."

"Sir," said Aucassin, "I thank you. Good advice is a thing I hold dear."

"Mount on a horse," said the knight, "and ride along the forest side to refresh yourself. You will see the flowers and the plants and hear the little birds sing. And by chance, you may also hear some words that will make you better."

"Sir," said Aucassin, "much thanks! I will do it."

He stole out of the hall and went down the stairs, and came to the stable where his war-horse was. He had him saddled and bridled, and putting his foot in the stirrup, he mounted and rode from the castle, and went on until he came to the forest. And riding still farther, he came to the spring, and found the herd-boys at the point of none. They had spread a cloak on the grass, and were eating their bread and making a great merriment.

"Jolly herd-boys, every one!
Martin, Emery, and John,
Aubrey, Fruelin, and Bob,
Round the spring did they hob-nob!
'Mates, a toast!' cried Fruelin,
'Here's to handsome Aucassin!
God bless him! And the shapely lass,
With her blue eyes and shining face,
Young and yellow-haired and bonny—
She who gave us all this money,
Enough to buy us cake and fruit,
Hunting-horn and pipe and flute,
Cudgel and a long, sheathed knife—
God guard her life!'"

When Aucassin heard the boys, he thought of Nicolette, his sweetest darling whom he loved so much: and he believed she must have been there. And pricking the horse with the spurs, he came to the herd-boys.

"Fair children, God help you!"

"God bless you," said the lad who was readier of speech than the others.

"Good boys," said Aucassin, "sing that song again that you were singing just now."

"We will not sing it," said the one with the ready speech. "God's curse on him who sings that song for you, fair sir!"

"Good boys," said Aucassin, "do you not know me?"

"Yes, we know you quite well. You are Aucassin, our young lord. But we are not your men: we are the Count's men!"

"Good boys, you will sing that song, I beg you!"

"By gog's heart, just listen to him!" said the herd-boy. "Why should I sing for you, if I do not want to? There is no man so

powerful in this country, saving only Count Garin himself, who, if he found my oxen or cows or sheep in his meadows or wheat-fields, would be daring enough to drive them out. For I would blind him for it ! And why should I sing for you, if it does not suit me ? ”

“ So help me God, sweet children, you will do what I want. Here are ten shillings that I have in my purse. ”

“ Sir, we will take your money ; but I will not sing you that song, for I have sworn I would not. But I will tell you a tale if you like. ”

“ In God’s name, ” said Aucassin, “ I had rather listen to a tale than hear nothing. ”

“ Sir, we were sitting just here, between prime and tierce, and eating our bread at this spring, as we are doing now. And a maid came here, the loveliest thing in the world, so that we fancied she was a fairy woman, and she lightened up all this wood. And she gave us money, and we made a bargain with her that if you came here we would tell you that you must go hunting through this forest. There is a beast there that, if you took it, you would not sell one of its limbs for five hundred pounds of silver, or for any wealth. For the beast has such a medicine that, if you can take it, you will be cured of all your troubles. Within three days must you capture it, and if you do not take it by then, you will never see it again. Now hunt it if you like, or leave it if you like ; for well have I carried out my part of the bargain ! ”

“ Fair boys, ” said Aucassin, “ you have said enough, and God grant that I find it ! ”

“ Hearing from the maid he loved,
Aucassin was deeply moved ;
Her words so touched him to the heart,
Quick from the boys did he depart,
Galloping into the deep wood,
And singing in a lightsome mood :
‘ Track of boar and slot of deer,
Neither do I follow here.
Nicolette it is I chase
Down the winding, woodland ways.
Your white body, your blue eyes,
Lovely laughter, low replies,
Wound me to the heart, my sweet !
But now we two again shall meet,
Please God ! my griefs draw to an end,
Sister and friend ! ’ ”

Aucassin ranged the forest from path to path, and his war-horse carried him at a quick gallop. But do not think that the briars and thorns spared him. Not at all ! They tore his clothes so that it

would have been hard work to patch them together, and the blood ran from his arms, sides, and legs in thirty or forty places ; so that the lad could have been tracked by the blood that fell on the grass. But he thought so much on Nicolette, his sweet love, that he felt no hurt or pain, and all day long he rode in this way through the forest without hearing news of her. And when he saw that evening was drawing on, he began to weep because he had not found her.

While he was riding along an old grass-grown way, he looked ahead and saw a lad such as I will describe. He was tall and astonishing, and ugly and hideous. He had a great shock-head as black as coal, and his two eyes were more than a full palm breadth apart ; and he had large cheeks, and an immense flat nose, and great wide nostrils, thick lips redder than roast-meat, and big, ugly yellow teeth. He had leggings and shoes of ox-hide, laced with bast above the knee ; and wrapped in a rough cloak, he leaned on a great club. Aucassin sprang to meet him, and was terrified when he looked at him.

" Fair brother, God aid you ! "

" God bless you ! " said he.

" So help you God, what are you doing there ? "

" What does it matter to you ? "

" Nothing," said Aucassin. " I do not ask you for any ill cause."

" But why are you weeping," said he, " and making such sorrow ? Faith ! were I as rich as you are, nothing in all the world would make me weep."

" Bah, do you know me ? " said Aucassin.

" Aye, I know very well that you are Aucassin, the Count's son, and if you will tell me why you weep, I will tell you what I am doing here."

" Faith ! " said Aucassin, " right willingly will I tell you. I came this morning to hunt in the forest with a white greyhound, the finest of the age, and I have lost it, and it makes me weep."

" Hear him ! " said he. " By the heart that the Lord had in His belly ! You wept for a stinking dog ! God curse him who thinks anything of you ! Why, there is no rich man in this land but, if your father wanted ten or fifteen or twenty dogs, he would send them only too willingly, and be glad to get rid of them. I am the one who should weep and make sorrow."

" And why you, brother ? "

" Sir, I will tell you. I was hired man to a rich farmer, and did his ploughing. I had four oxen, and three days ago a great misfortune happened to me. I lost my best ox, Roget—the finest of my team—and I have been looking for the beast ever since. I have had neither food nor drink for the last three days ; and I dare not

go into the town. For they would put me in prison, as I have not the money to pay for it. I have nothing in the world except what you see on my body. I have a poor, unhappy mother who had nothing of any value but a mattress, and they have dragged that from under her back, and left her to lie on the bare straw. I am more troubled for her than for myself. For money comes and goes. I have lost now, but I shall gain another time, and I shall pay for my ox when I can. Nor will I weep for it. And you wept for a dunghill dog! God's curse on him who thinks much of you again!"

"Faith, you are a good comforter, fair brother! Bless you for it! What was your ox worth?"

"Sir, twenty shillings is what they ask for it. I cannot beat them down a single farthing."

"Here are twenty shillings in my purse," said Aucassin, "take them and pay for your lost ox."

"Sir," said the ploughman, "great thanks. May God help you to find the thing you are looking for!"

He went away, and Aucassin rode on. The night was fine and still, and he wandered onward till he came to the place where the seven paths branched out, and saw before him the bower that Nicolette had made, lined within and without with flowers, and so lovely it could not be lovelier. When Aucassin saw it he reined up suddenly, and the light of the moon struck into the bower.

"Ah, God!" said Aucassin, "here Nicolette, my sweet love, has been, and she has made this with her fair hands. For the sweetness of her, and for her love, I shall alight now, and rest here for the night."

He put his foot from the stirrup to dismount, and his horse was big and high. He thought so much on Nicolette, his sweetest darling, that he fell hard upon a stone, and his shoulder shot out of place. He felt badly hurt, but struggled on as well as he could, and with his good hand he tied his horse to a hawthorn, and then, turning over on his side, he drew himself on his back into the bower. And looking through a hole in the leaves and the flowers he saw the stars of the sky; and seeing one brighter than the others, he began to sing:

"Little star, I see thee there,
Thou that the moon draws unto her!
My love with her golden head
Now is with thee. God has need
Of her loveliness on high,
To light up the evening sky;
And it is her yellow hair
Shining on the darkness there!"

Oh, my love, were mine the bliss
 To climb to you and take a kiss,
 I would not regret the pain,
 When I fell to earth again !
 I would hold a kiss thus won,
 Were I now a great king's son,
 Worth life, dear one ! "

When Nicolette heard Aucassin she came to him, for she was not far off. Entering the bower, she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him and embraced him.

" Fair, sweet friend, you are well met ! "

" And you, fair sweet love, you are well met ! "

And they kissed each other, and held each other fast, and their joy was lovely to see.

" Ha, sweetheart ! " said Aucassin, " just now I was sorely hurt in my shoulder, but since I found you I feel no sorrow or pain ! "

Nicolette searched for his hurt, and found that he had shot his shoulder. She handled it so with her white hands and so pulled it that—by the grace of God, who loves all lovers—it settled back in its place. Then she gathered flowers, fresh grass, and green leaves, and bound them on with a strip of her smock, and he was quite healed.

" Aucassin," said she, " fair, sweet friend, let us consider what is to be done. If your father has a search made through this forest to-morrow, and his men find me—whatever may happen to you—I shall be killed ! "

" Faith, my sweet and lovely love, I should be mightily grieved at that. But they shall never take you, if I can prevent it."

He mounted his horse and took his love in front of him, kissing and embracing her, and they rode out into the open fields.

" Aucassin, the loving lad,
 Tall and comely, brave and glad,
 Rode from the wood, and his arms met
 Round the body of Nicolette,
 Sitting upon his saddle bow,
 In front of him. Her eyes, her brow,
 Her mouth, her chin, he kissed ; and then
 He drew her back, and kissed again,
 Till she asked him, anxiously,
 ' Aucassin, sweetheart, tell me
 Through whose lands shall we now go ? '
 ' Dearest love, I do not know.
 Little I reck what road we take,
 Roundabout or through the brake,
 So that you are with me still ! '
 Down the valley and over the hill,

By castle and town they rode away;
 Reached the sea at break of day,
 And alighted on the sand,
 Down by the strand "

Aucassin and his love alighted as you have heard. Taking his horse by the bridle and his love by the hand, he began to walk along the shore ; and as they were walking together, Aucassin saw some merchants sailing in a ship close to the land. He beckoned to them, and they landed, and he gave them some money, and they took him and his lady and his horse on their ship. And when they were on the high sea a great and marvellous storm arose which drove them from land to land, until they arrived in a strange country and entered the port of Torelore. Then they asked what country it was, and they were told it was the land of the King of Torelore.

" What sort of man is he ? " said Aucassin. " And is he engaged in any war ? "

" Yes, a great war," said the men of the country.

Aucassin took leave of the merchants, and they commended him to God. Girding his sword about him, he mounted his horse, and set his love in front of him, and rode on till he came to the castle. He asked where the King was, and he was told that he lay in child-bed.

" Where then is his wife ? "

And they told him that she was with the army, and had taken all the people of the land with her on a great war.

And when Aucassin heard it he was struck with great astonishment, and alighting at the palace, he gave his horse to Nicolette to hold, and entered with his sword, and wandered about until he came to the room where the King lay.

" Aucassin, the fair, young lord,
 Entered the chamber with drawn sword ;
 Angry strode up to the bed
 On which the King was laid ; and said,
 ' Fool ! Why do you do this thing ? '
 ' I have borne a son,' said the King
 ' When my month is gone at length,
 And I come to health and strength,
 Then shall I hear mass once more,
 As my fathers did before ;
 And a great war undertake,
 Till mine enemies I break,
 And prisoners make. ' "

When Aucassin heard the King speak in this way, he pulled all the sheets from the bed, and flung them down on the floor. He saw

behind him a stick. He took it, and turned round, and beat the King so much that he was like to have killed him.

"Ha, fair sir!" said the King, "what is it that you want of me? Have you lost your wits, you who beat me in my own house?"

"By the heart of God!" said Aucassin, "you shameless whorson! I will kill you unless you give me your word that never another man in your land shall lie in child-bed."

The King plighted his word, and when this was done:

"Sir," said Aucassin, "now lead me to the place where your wife is with the army."

"Sir, willingly," said the King.

He mounted a horse and Aucassin mounted his, and Nicolette remained in the Queen's chamber. And the King and Aucassin rode till they came to the battlefield where the Queen was. And they found it was a battle of roasted crab apples from the wood, and eggs and fresh cheeses. And Aucassin began to stare and wonder greatly at the sight.

"Aucassin, the gallant knight,
From his saddle watched the fight;
Saw the warriors trudge afar,
With their muniments of war.
In great stacks the cheeses stood,
And roast apples from the wood;
Mushrooms from the field they brought,
And with these they fiercely fought.
He who muddled most the ford
Was acclaimed the great war-lord.
But louder than the shouting after
Was Aucassin's laughter!"

When Aucassin saw this strange thing, he went and spoke to the King.

"Sir," said Aucassin, "are those men there your enemies?"

"Yes, sir," said the King.

"And is it your wish that I should take vengeance on them for you?"

"Yes," he said, "certainly."

Aucassin took his sword in his hand, and sprang in the middle of them, and began to strike to the right and the left, and killed many of them. And when the King saw that the men were slain, he seized Aucassin's bridle:

"Ha, fair sir!" he said, "do not kill them in that way!"

"How," said Aucassin. "Do you not want me to revenge your wrongs?"

"Sir," said the King, "you have done it too well. It is not our custom to kill one another."

The enemy turned and fled, and the King and Aucassin went back

to the Castle of Torelore. And the people of the country bade their King drive Aucassin out of the land, and keep Nicolette for his son, as she seemed to be a lady of noble race. And Nicolette heard of it, and she was not pleased, and she said :

“ Though your people, my good King,
Deem me but a foolish thing ;—
When in my love’s arms I lie,
And he knows how sweet am I,
Then I am of such a mind
That I can no pleasure find
In dance and song and music born
Of fiddle and harp and flute and horn.
All other joys upon this earth
Seem nothing worth ! ”

Aucassin lived at the Castle of Torelore in great ease and in great delight, for he had with him Nicolette, his sweet darling whom he loved so much. And while he was living in such ease and such delight, a fleet of Saracens came over the sea, and attacked the castle, and took it by storm. They took its wealth, and led the people away to be sold as slaves. They took Nicolette and Aucassin, and bound Aucassin hand and foot, and threw him in one ship, and Nicolette in another, and a storm broke over the sea and drove the two ships apart. The ship in which Aucassin was cast drifted over the waters till it arrived at the Castle of Beaucaire ; and the people of the country ran down to gut the wreck, and found Aucassin and recognised him. When the men of Beaucaire saw their young lord, they made great joy over him. For Aucassin had been living for more than three years at the Castle of Torelore, and his father and mother were dead. They led him to the Castle of Beaucaire, and they all became his liege men, and he held his land in peace.

“ To his city of Beaucaire
Did Count Aucassin repair,
Holding all his dignities
And his land and men in peace.
But by the might of God, he swore
To lose his lady pained him more
Than to find his kinsfolk gone,
Dead and buried, every one !
‘ My sweet love, I do not know
Where in quest of you to go !
There is no land made by God,
Where ship has sailed or man has trod,
But I would search it through and through,
To light on you ! ’ ”

Now we will leave Aucassin, and tell of Nicolette. The ship into which she was cast belonged to the King of Carthage, and he was her

father, and she had twelve brothers, all Kings or Princes. When they saw how lovely was Nicolette, they treated her with high honour and rejoiced over her; and much they questioned her who she was, for she looked a very noble lady and of high degree. But she could not tell them who she was, for she had been carried off when she was a little child. They rowed on, till they came beneath the city of Carthage. And when Nicolette saw the walls of the castle and the country, she knew that it was there she had been brought up and carried off when she was a little child. But she was not so small a child but that she could not recollect that she had been daughter to the King of Carthage and bred in the city.

“ Brave was Nicolette and bright,
Till the shore came full in sight :
But when she descried the walls,
Wharves and palaces and halls,
Sadly she began to cry :
‘ For my unhappiness was I
Born of the noblest lineage here,
Kinswoman to the great Amir,
And princess of fair Carthagen,
Where now, a slave, I land again !
Aucassin, fair, noble youth,
Soul of honour and of truth !
Your sweet love still drives me on,
Works in me, and will not be gone !
Spirit of God ! grant me the grace,
To lie once more in your embrace,
Kissed on my mouth, my eyes, my face,
My love, my lord ! ’ ”

When the King of Carthage heard Nicolette speak thus, he threw his arms round her neck :

“ Sweet lovely darling,” he said, “ tell me who you are ? Do not be afraid of me.”

“ Sir,” said she, “ I am daughter to the King of Carthage, and was carried off as a little child, full fifteen years ago.”

When they heard her speak thus, they knew right well that she spoke truly, and they rejoiced greatly over her, and led her into the palace in great honour as the King’s daughter. There she lived for three or four years, till one day they wished her to wed a great pagan King ; but she had no liking for that marriage. She thought out some device by which she could go in search of Aucassin. She sought for a viol, and learnt to play it. Then she stole out at night, and came to the seaport, and lodged in the house of a poor woman by the shore. And she took an herb, and with it she smeared her head and face, so that she was all dark and stained. And she had a coat made, and cloak, shirt, and breeches. And she dressed herself

up in the manner of a minstrel, and took her viol, and called on a mariner, and paid him money so that he took her on his ship. They set their sail and voyaged over the high sea till they reached the land of Provence. And Nicolette left the ship, and wept playing through the country till she came to the Castle of Beaucaire where Aucassin was.

“ Under the tower of Beaucaire town,
Aucassin in state sat down :
And around him gathered then
The great lords who were his men.
Seeing all the flowers of spring,
And hearing all the small birds sing,
He called to mind the happy days,
When he rode the woodland ways
With his sweetheart, Nicolette,
Till his eyes with tears were wet.
And look you ! Nicolette was there,
Standing on the castle stair !
She took her viol and her bow,
And cried : ‘ Fair Barons, listen now !
Yes, those beneath and those above,
Please listen to a tale of love,
Of Aucassin, a gallant knight,
And Nicolette, a lady bright !
Long their love endured, and he
Sought her beneath the greenwood tree :
But from the tower of Tolelore
The pagans the two lovers bore.
Of Aucassin is nothing known.
Nicolette is in Carthage town,
Where her father reigns as King,
And loves her more than anything.
Fain is he to marry her
To Caliph, Sultan, or Emir :
But she takes no thought of this
All her love and all her bliss
Are set upon a Christian lad—
Aucassin was the name he had !
And in the Name of God she vows
Never a lord will she espouse,
Save one she now knows nothing of—
Her own true love ! ’ ”

When Aucassin heard Nicolette sing, he was full of joy, and drew her on one side to speak to her :

“ Fair, sweet brother,” said Aucassin, “ do you know anything of this Nicolette of whom you have sung ? ”

“ Sir, yes ! I know her as the noblest creature and the gentlest and wisest that ever was born. She is daughter to the King of Carthage, who captured her when Aucassin was taken, and carried her to his city as soon as he knew right well that she was his daughter,

and made great rejoicing over her, and every day he wished to give her in marriage to one of the high Kings of Spain. But she would rather let herself be hanged or burnt than take any of them for husband, no matter how great they were."

"Ha! fair, sweet brother!" said Count Aucassin, "if you would go back to that land and tell her to come and speak to me, I would give you as much of my wealth as you dare ask or take. Do you know that for the love of her I will have no wife, no matter how high her birth? So I wait for her, and I will not marry unless I have her. And had I known where I could find her, I should not have to seek her now."

"Sir," she said, "if you will do all you say, I will go to seek her for your sake and for hers, for I love her."

Aucassin pledged his word and then he ordered twenty pounds to be given to her. She turned away, and he fell weeping for the sweetness of Nicolette. And when she saw him weep:

"Sir," said she, "do not be afraid. In a little while I will bring her to you in this town, so that you shall see her."

And when Aucassin heard it, he was very joyful. And she left him and went into the town to the house of the Viscountess, for the Viscount, her godfather, was dead. She lodged there and spoke to the dame and revealed her secret, and the Viscountess recognised her, and knew right well it was Nicolette whom she had brought up. And she had her washed and bathed and made her stay eight full days with her. And Nicolette took a herb that is called the celandine, and anointed herself with it, and was as lovely as she had been at any time. She dressed herself in splendid cloths of silk, of which the dame had plenty, and she sat down in the chamber on a coverlet of cloth of silk, and called the dame, and told her to go for Aucassin her friend. And she did so. And when the dame came to the palace she found Aucassin weeping and lamenting for Nicolette his love, because she tarried so long. And the dame said:

"Aucassin, grieve no more! But come with me, and I will show you the thing in the world that you love most. For it is Nicolette, your sweet darling, who has come to seek you from far-off lands."

And Aucassin was glad.

"Now, when Aucassin was told
Of his love with the hair of gold,
That she would in Beaucaire arrive,
He was the happiest soul alive!
With the dame away went he
To her house, right hastily,
Into the chamber, all aflame,
Where his love, Nicolette, sat, he came!
And when she saw her love appear,
Her joy was more than she could bear.

She leaped to him, and stretching out
His arms, he folded her about.
Tender and long was his embrace :
He kissed her eyes and mouth and face :
So the night sped. Then Nicolette ¶
And Aucassin at the altar met :
And she, the bride beyond compare,
Became the Lady of Beaucaire.
Long was their wedded life and sweet,
And great the joy they had in it.
Thus has Nicolette her bliss,
And her Aucassin has his.
Our song-story now o'er.
I know no more ! ”

MEDIAEVAL ITALIAN 13TH CENTURY

KING PHILIP AND HIS GREEK SLAVE

IN a certain part of Greece there lived a King of great sway, of the name of Philip. This King, for some alleged crime or other, had imprisoned a Greek, a man of great learning, whose wisdom mounted to the skies. It happened one day that this monarch received from the King of Spain a present of a noble horse, of great size and of a beautiful form. The King sent for his farrier to learn his opinion of the horse, but he was told that he had better apply to the learned Greek. He therefore ordered the horse to be led into the field, and then commanded the Greek to be brought from his prison, and addressing him, said : " Master, let me have your opinion of this horse, for I have heard a great report of your wisdom."

The Greek inspected the horse, and replied : " Sire, this horse is indeed a beautiful courser, but in my opinion he has been nurtured on asses' milk."

The King sent to Spain to inquire how the horse had been brought up, and found that the dam had died, and that the foal, as the Greek had asserted, had been reared on asses' milk. This circumstance astonished the King not a little, and as a reward, he ordered half a loaf of bread a day to be given to the Greek at the expense of the court. It fell out on another occasion, that as the King was inspecting his jewels, he sent again for the Greek, and said to him : " Master, tell me, I pray you, which of these stones seems to you the most valuable."

The Greek replied : " Sire, which of them do you yourself consider as the most precious one ? "

The King then took up one of the most beautiful amongst them and said : " This one, master, seems to me the most beautiful, and one of the highest value."

The Greek examined it, and straining it closely in the palm of his hand, and placing it to his ear, said : " This stone, sire, appears to me to have a living worm in it."

The King sent for his lapidary, and ordered him to break the stone, and to their surprise the animal was found within. The King now looked upon the Greek as a man of surprising wisdom, and ordered a whole loaf of bread to be given him daily at the expense of the court. It happened not many days after this that the King, entertaining some suspicions of his own legitimacy, again sent for the Greek, and taking him into his closet, said : " Master, I hold you for a man of great penetration, which indeed has been manifested in your answers to the questions I have proposed to you. I wish you now to inform me whose son I am."

The Greek then replied : " Sire, how strange a request ! You well know that you are the son of your honoured predecessor."

But the King, dissatisfied, said : " Do not evade my question, but tell me the truth implicitly ; for if you hesitate, you shall instantly die the death of a traitor." " Then, sire," answered the Greek, " I must inform you that you are the son of a baker."

Upon this, the King being anxious to know the real truth, sent for the Queen-Mother, and by threats compelled her to confess that the words of the Greek were true. The King then shut himself up in his chamber with the Greek, and said : " Master mine, I have received singular proofs of your wisdom, and I now entreat you to tell me how you have obtained a knowledge of these things."

Then the Greek replied : " Sire, I will inform you. With respect to the horse, I knew that he had been nourished with asses' milk from his hanging his ears, which is not natural to a horse. And that there was a live worm in the stone I knew from the fact that stones are naturally cold, but this one I found to be warm, and it was therefore evident that the heat could only proceed from a living animal within."

" And how," said the King, " did you discover that I was the son of a baker ?"

The Greek then replied : " Because when I told you of the wonderful circumstances of the horse, you ordered me a gift of half a loaf a day ; and when I told you of the stone with the living worm in it, you ordered me a whole loaf. I then felt assured whose son you were ; for if you had really been a king's son, you would have presented me with a city, as my merits deserved ; whereas your origin then betrayed itself, and your natural disposition was satisfied in giving me a loaf, as your father the baker would have done."

The King was then sensible of his own meanness, and immediately liberated the Greek from prison, and loaded him with gifts of value.

MEDIAEVAL ITALIAN

THE HERMIT AND THE TREASURE

A GENTLE hermit one day proceeding on his way through a vast forest, chanced to discover a large cave nearly hidden under ground. Being greatly fatigued, he entered to repose himself a while, and observing something shine brightly in the distance, he approached, and found it was a heap of gold. At the sight of the glittering bait he turned away, and hastening through the forest again as fast as possible he had the farther misfortune to fall into the hands of three fierce robbers, always on the watch to despoil the unwary travellers who might pass that way. But, though inmates of the forest, they had never yet discovered the treasure from which the hermit now fled. The thieves on first perceiving him thus strangely flying, without any one in pursuit, were seized with a sort of unaccountable dread, though, at the same time, they ventured forward to ascertain the cause. On approaching to inquire, the hermit, without relaxing his pace answered, "I flee from death, who is urging me sorely behind."

The robbers, unable to perceive any one, cried out, "Show us where he is, or take us to the place instantly."

The hermit therefore replied, in a hurried voice, "Follow me, then," and proceeded towards the grotto. He there pointed out to them the fatal place, beseeching them, at the same time, to abstain from even looking at it, as they had far better do as he had done, and avoid it. But the thieves, resolving to know what strange thing it was which had alarmed him, only bade him lead the way: which, being in terror of his life, the hermit quickly did; and showing them the heap of gold, "Here," he said, "is the death which was in pursuit of me"; and the thieves, suddenly seizing upon the treasure, began to rejoice exceedingly.

They afterwards permitted the good man to proceed upon his way, amusing themselves when he was gone with ridiculing his absurd conduct. The three robbers, guarding the gold in their possession, began to consider in what way they should employ it. One of them observed, "Since Heaven has bestowed such good fortune upon us,

we ought by no means to leave the place for a moment without bearing the whole of it along with us."

"No," replied another, "it appears to me we had better not do so; but let one of us take a small portion, and set out to buy wine and viands at the city, besides many other things he may think we are in want of"; and to this the other two consented.

Now the great demon, who is very ingenious and busy on these occasions to effect as much mischief as possible, directly began to deal with the one fixed upon to furnish provisions from the city. "As soon," whispered the devil to him, "as I shall have reached the city, I will eat and drink of the best of everything, as much as I please, and then purchase what I want. Afterwards, I will mix with the food I intend for my companions something which I trust will settle their account, thus becoming sole master of the whole of the treasure, which will make me one of the richest men in this part of the world"; and as he purposed to do, so he did.

He carried the poisoned food to his companions, who, on their part, while he had been away, had come to the conclusion of killing him on his return, in order that they might divide the booty between themselves, saying, "Let us fall upon him the moment he comes, and afterwards eat what he has brought, and divide the money between us in much larger shares than before."

The robber who had been at the city now returned with the articles he had bought, when the other two instantly pierced his body with their lances, and despatched him with their knives. They then began to feast upon the provisions prepared for them, and upon satiating their appetite, both soon after were seized with violent pangs, and fell dead upon the ground. In this manner all three fell victims to each other's avarice and cruelty, without obtaining their ill-gotten wealth, a striking proof of the judgment of Heaven upon traitors; for, attempting to compass the death of others, they justly incurred their own. The poor hermit thus wisely fled from the gold, which remained without a single claimant.

TALES FROM THE "GESTA ROMANORUM"

THE HUSBAND OF AGLAES

IN Rome some time dwelt a mighty Emperor, named Philominus, who had one only daughter, who was fair and gracious in the sight of every man, who had to name Aglaes. There was also in the Emperor's palace a gentle knight that loved dearly this lady.

It befell after on a day, that this knight talked with this lady, and secretly uttered his desire to her. Then she said courteously, "Seeing you have uttered to me the secrets of your heart, I will likewise for your love utter to you the secrets of my heart, and truly I say, that above all other I love you best."

Then said the knight, "I purpose to visit the Holy Land, and therefore give me your troth, that this seven years you shall take no other man, but only for my love to tarry for me so long, and if I come not again by this day seven years, then take what man you like best. And likewise I promise you that within this seven years I will take no wife."

Then said she, "This covenant pleaseth me well."

When this was said, each of them was betrothed to other, and then this knight took his leave of the lady, and went to the Holy Land.

Shortly after the Emperor treated with the King of Hungary for the marriage of his daughter. Then came the King of Hungary to the Emperor's palace, to see his daughter, and when he had seen her, he liked marvellous well her beauty and her behaviour, so that the Emperor and the King were accorded in all things as touching the marriage, upon the condition that the damsel would consent.

Then called the Emperor the young lady to him, and said, "O my fair daughter, I have provided for thee, that a king shall be thy husband, if thou list consent, therefore tell me what answer thou wilt give to this."

Then said she to her father, "It pleaseth me well : but one thing, dear father, I intreat of you, if it might please you to grant me : I have vowed to keep my virginity and not to marry these seven years ; therefore, dear father, I beseech you for all the love that is between your gracious fatherhood and me, that you name no man

to be my husband till these seven years be ended, and then I shall be ready in all things to fulfil your will."

Then said the Emperor, "Sith it is so that thou hast thus vowed, I will not break thy vow, but when these seven years be expired, thou shalt have the King of Hungary to thy husband."

Then the Emperor sent forth his letters to the King of Hungary, praying him if it might please him to stay seven years for the love of his daughter, and then he should speed without fail. Herewith the King was pleased and content to stay the prefixed day.

And when the seven years were ended, save a day, the young lady stood in her chamber window, and wept sore, saying, "Woe and alas, as to-morrow my love promised to be with me again from the Holy Land, and also the King of Hungary to-morrow will be here to marry me, according to my father's promise; and if my love comes not at a certain hour, then am I utterly deceived of the inward love I bear to him."

When the day came, the King hastened toward the Emperor, to marry his daughter, and was royally arrayed in purple. And while the King was riding on his way, there came a knight riding on his way, who said,

"I am of the empire of Rome, and now am lately come from the Holy Land, and I am ready to do you the best service I can."

And as they rode talking by the way, it began to rain so fast, that all the King's apparel was sore wet.

Then said the knight, "My lord, ye have done foolishly, for as much as ye brought not with you your house."

Then said the King, "Why speakest thou so? My house is large and broad, and made of stones, and mortar. How should I bring then with me my house? Thou speakest like a fool."

When this was said, they rode on till they came to a great deep water, and the King smote his horse with his spurs, and leapt into the water, so that he was almost drowned. When the knight saw this, and was over on the other side of the water without peril, he said to the King, "Ye were in peril, and therefore ye did foolishly, because you brought not with you your bridge."

Then said the King, "Thou speakest strangely. My bridge is made of lime and stone, and containeth in quality more than half a mile. How should I then bear with me my bridge? Therefore thou speakest foolishly."

"Well," said the knight, "my foolishness may turn thee to wisdom."

When the King had ridden a little farther, he asked the knight what time of day it was.

Then said the knight, "If any man hath list to eat, it is time of the day to eat. Wherefore, my lord, pray take a *modicum* with me, for

that is no dishonour to you, but great honour to me before the states of this empire."

Then said the King, "I will gladly eat with thee."

They sat both down in a fair vine garden, and there dined together, both the King and the knight. And when dinner was done, and that the King had washed, the knight said unto the King, "My lord, ye have done foolishly, for that ye brought not with you your father and mother."

Then said the King, "What sayest thou? My father is dead, and my mother is old, and may not travel. How should I then bring them with me? Therefore, to say the truth, a foolisher man than thou art did I never hear."

Then said the knight, "Every work is praised at the end."

When the knight had ridden a little farther, and nigh to the Emperor's palace, he asked leave to go from him, for he knew a nearer way to the palace, to the young lady, that he might come first, and carry her away with him.

Then said the King, "I pray thee, tell me by what place thou purposeth to ride?"

Then said the knight, "I shall tell you the truth: this day seven years I left a net in a place, and now I purpose to visit it, and draw it to me, and if it be whole, then will I take it to me, and keep it as a precious jewel; if it be broken, then will I leave it." And when he had thus said, he took his leave of the King, and rode forth, but the King kept the broad highway.

When the Emperor heard of the King's coming, he went towards him with a great company, and royally received him, causing him to shift his wet clothes, and to put on fresh apparel. And when the Emperor and the King were set at meat, the Emperor welcomed him with all the cheer and solace that he could. And when he had eaten, the Emperor asked tidings of the King.

"My lord," said he, "I shall tell you what I have heard this day by the way: there came a knight to me, and reverently saluted me; and anon after there fell a great rain, and greatly spoiled my apparel. And anon the knight said, 'Sir, ye have done foolishly, for that ye brought not with you your house.'"

Then said the Emperor, "What clothing had the knight on?"

"A cloak," quoth the King.

Then said the Emperor, "Sure, that was a wise man, for the house whereof he spake was a cloak, and therefore he said to you, that you did foolishly because you came without your cloak, then your clothes had not been spoiled with rain."

Then said the King, "When we had ridden a little farther, we came to a deep water, and I smote my horse with my spurs, and I was almost drowned, but he rode through the water without any

peril: then said he to me, ' You did foolishly, for that you brought not with you your bridge.' "

" Verily," said the Emperor, " he saith truth, for he called the squires the bridge, that should have ridden before you, and assayed the deepness of the water."

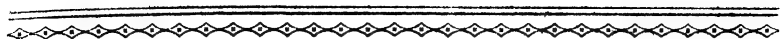
Then said the King, " We rode farther, and at the last he prayed me to dine with him. And when he had dined, he said I did unwisely, because I brought not with me my father and mother."

" Truly," said the Emperor, " he was a wise man, and saith [wisely], for he called your father and mother, bread and wine, and other victual."

Then said the King, " We rode farther, and anon after he asked me leave to go from me, and I asked earnestly whither he went and he answered again, and said, ' This day seven years, I left a net in a private place, and now I will ride to see it; and if it be broken and torn, then will I leave it, but if it be as I left it then shall it be unto me right precious.' "

When the Emperor heard this, he cried with a loud voice, and said, " O ye my knights and servants, come ye with me speedily unto my daughter's chamber, for surely that is the net of which he spake."

And forthwith his knights and servants went unto his daughter's chamber, and found her not, for the aforesaid knight had taken her with him. And thus the King was deceived of the damsel, and he went home again to his own country ashamed.



“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THEODOSIUS OF ROME

THEODOSIUS reigned, a wise Emperor, in the city of Rome, and mighty he was of power ; the which Emperor had three daughters. So it liked to this Emperor to know which of his daughters loved him best.

And then he said to the eldest daughter, “ How much lovest thou me ? ”

“ Forsooth,” quoth she, “ more than I do myself.”

“ Therefore,” quoth he, “ thou shalt be highly advanced,” and married her to a rich and mighty king.

Then he came to the second, and said to her, “ Daughter, how much lovest thou me ? ”

“ As much, forsooth,” said she, “ as I do myself.”

So the Emperor married her to a duke.

And then he said to the third daughter, “ How much lovest thou me ? ”

“ Forsooth,” quoth she, “ as much as ye be worthy, and no more.”

Then said the Emperor, “ Daughter, sith thou lovest me no more, thou shalt not be married so richly as thy sisters be.”

And then he married her to an earl.

After this it happened that the Emperor held battle against the King of Egypt. And the King drove the Emperor out of the empire, in so much that the Emperor had no place to abide in. So he wrote letters, ensealed with his ring, to his first daughter, that said that she loved him more than herself, for to pray her of succouring in that great need, because he was put out of his empire.

And when the daughter had read these letters, she told it to the King, her husband. Then, quoth the King, “ It is good that we succour him in this need. I shall,” quoth he, “ gather an host and help him in all that I can or may, and that will not be done without great costage.”

“ Yea,” quoth she, “ it were sufficient if that we would grant him five knights to be in fellowship with him, while he is out of his empire.”

And so it was done indeed. And the daughter wrote again to the father, that other help might he not have but five knights of the King

to be in his fellowship, at the cost of the King her husband. And when the Emperor heard this, he was heavy in his heart, and said, "Alas ! alas ! all my trust was in her, for she said she loved me more than herself, and therefore I advanced her so high."

Then he wrote to the second that said she loved him as much as herself, and when she had read his letters, she showed his errand to her husband, and gave him in counsel that he should find him meat and drink and clothing honestly, as for the state of such a lord during time of his need.

And when this was granted, she wrote letters again to her father. The Emperor was heavy with his answer, and said, "Sith my two daughters have thus treated me, soothly I shall prove the third."

And so he wrote to the third, that said she loved him as much as he was worthy, and prayed her of succour in his need, and told her the answer of her two sisters.

So the third daughter, when she had considered the mischief of her father, she told her husband in this form : "My worshipful lord, do succour me now in this great need. My father is put out of his empire and his heritage."

Then spake he, "What were thy will I do thereto ?"

"That ye gather a great host," quoth she, "and help him to fight against his enemies."

"I shall fulfil thy will," said the Earl ; and gathered a great host, and went with the Emperor at his own costage to the battle, and had the victory, and set the Emperor again in his heritage.

And then said the Emperor, "Blessed be the hour I gat my youngest daughter : I loved her less than any of the other, and now in my need she hath succoured me, and the other have failed me ; and therefore after my death she shall have mine empire."

And so it was done indeed ; for after the death of the Emperor the youngest daughter reigned in his stead, and ended peaceably.

“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THE THREE CASKETS

SOME time dwelt in Rome a mighty Emperor, named Anselm, who had married the King's daughter of Jerusalem, a fair lady, and gracious in the sight of every man, but she was long time with the Emperor ere she bare him any child ; wherefore the nobles of the empire were very sorrowful, because their lord had no heir of his own body begotten : till at last it befell that this Anselm walked after supper, in an evening, into his garden, and bethought himself that he had no heir, and how the King of Ampluy warred on him continually, for so much as he had no son to make defence in his absence; therefore he was sorrowful, and went to his chamber and slept.

Then he thought he saw a vision in his sleep, that the morning was more clear than it was wont to be, and that the moon was much paler on the one side than on the other. And after he saw a bird of two colours, and by that bird stood two beasts, which fed that little bird with their heat. And after that came more beasts, and bowing their breasts towards the bird, went their way : then came there divers birds that sung sweetly and pleasantly. With that the Emperor awaked.

In the morning early this Anselm remembered his vision, and wondered much what it might signify ; wherefore he called to him his philosophers, and all the states of the empire, and told them his dream, charging them to tell him the signification thereof on pain of death, and if they told him the true interpretation thereof, he promised them good reward.

Then said they, “ Dear lord, tell us your dream, and we shall declare to you what it betokens.”

Then the Emperor told them from the beginning to the ending, as is aforesaid. When the philosophers heard this, with glad cheer they answered and said :

“ Sir, the vision that you saw betokeneth good, for the empire shall be clearer than it is.

“ The moon that is more pale on the one side than on the other, betokeneth the Empress, that hath lost part of her colour, through the conception of a son that she hath conceived. The little bird

betokeneth the son that she shall bear. The two beasts that fed this bird betokeneth the wise and rich men of the empire which shall obey the son. These other beasts that bowed their breasts to the bird betoken many other nations that shall do him homage. The bird that sang so sweetly to this little bird betokeneth the Romans, who shall rejoice and sing because of his birth. This is the very interpretation of your dream."

When the Emperor heard this, he was right joyful. Soon after that, the Empress travailed in childbirth, and was delivered of a fair son, at whose birth there was great and wonderful joy made.

When the King of Ampluy heard this, he thought in himself thus: "Lo, I have warred against the Emperor all the days of my life, and now he hath a son, who, when he cometh to full age, will avenge the wrong I have done against his father; therefore it is better that I send to the Emperor, and beseech him of truce and peace, that the son may have nothing against me, when he cometh to manhood." When he had thus said to himself, he wrote to the Emperor, beseeching him to have peace.

When the Emperor saw that the King of Ampluy wrote to him more for fear than for love, he wrote again to him, that if he would find good and sufficient sureties to keep the peace, and bind himself all the days of his life to do him service and homage, he would receive him to peace.

When the King had read the tenor of the Emperor's letter, he called his council, praying them to give him counsel how he best might do as touching this matter.

Then said they: "It is good that ye obey the Emperor's will and commandment in all things. For first, in that he desired of you surety for the peace; to this we answer thus: 'Ye have but one daughter, and the Emperor one son, wherefore let a marriage be made between them, and that may be a perpetual covenant of peace.' Also he asketh homage and tribute, which it is good to fulfil."

Then the King sent his messengers to the Emperor, saying that he would fulfil his desire in all things, if it might please His Highness, that his son and the King's daughter might be married together. All this well pleased the Emperor, yet he sent again, saying, "If his daughter were a clean virgin from her birth unto that day, he would consent to that marriage."

Then was the King right glad, for his daughter was a clean virgin.

Therefore, when the letters of covenant and compact were sealed, the King furnished a fair ship, wherein he might send his daughter,

with many noble knights, ladies, and great riches, unto the Emperor, for to have his son in marriage.

And when they were sailing in the sea, towards Rome, a storm arose so extremely and so horribly that the ship brake against a rock, and they were all drowned save only the young lady, which fixed her hope and heart so greatly on God that she was saved ; and about three of the clock the tempest ceased, and the lady drove forth over the waves in that broken ship, which was cast up again. But a huge whale followed after, ready to devour both the ship and her.

Wherefore this young lady, when night came, smote fire with a stone, wherewith the ship was greatly lightened, and then the whale durst not adventure toward the ship for fear of that light. At the cock crowing, this young lady was so weary of the great tempest and trouble of sea that she slept, and within a little while after the fire ceased, and the whale came and devoured the virgin.

And when she awoke and found herself swallowed up in the whale's belly, she smote fire, and with a knife wounded the whale in many places, and when the whale felt himself wounded, according to his nature he began to swim to land.

There was dwelling at that time, in a country near by, a noble earl named Pirris, who, for his recreation walking on the sea-shore, saw the whale coming towards the land ; wherefore he turned home again, and gathered a great many of men and women, and came thither again, and fought with the whale, and wounded him very sore, and as they smote, the maiden that was in his belly cried with a high voice, and said :

" O gentle friends, have mercy and compassion on me, for I am a king's daughter, and a true virgin from the hour of my birth unto this day."

When the Earl heard this, he wondered greatly, and opened the side of the whale, and found the young lady, and took her out ; and when she was thus delivered, she told him forthwith whose daughter she was, and how she had lost all her goods in the sea, and how she should have been married unto the Emperor's son.

And when the Earl heard this he was very glad, and comforted her the more, and kept her with him till she was well refreshed. And in the meantime he sent messengers to the Emperor, letting him to know how the King's daughter was saved.

Then was the Emperor right glad of her safety, and, coming, had great compassion on her, saying, " Ah, good maiden, for the love of my son thou hast suffered much woe ; nevertheless, if thou be worthy to be his wife soon shall I prove."

And when he had thus said, he caused three vessels to be brought

forth: the first was made of pure gold, well beset with precious stones without, and within full of dead men's bones, and thereupon was engraven this posy: WHOSO CHUETH ME SHALL FIND THAT HE DESERVETH.

The second vessel was made of fine silver, filled with earth and worms; the superscription was thus: WHOSO CHUETH ME SHALL FIND THAT HIS NATURE DESIRETH.

The third vessel was made of lead, full within of precious stones, and thereupon was insculpt this posy: WHOSO CHUETH ME SHALL FIND THAT GOD HATH DISPOSED FOR HIM.

These three vessels the Emperor showed the maiden, and said: "Lo, here, daughter, these be rich vessels; if thou chuse one of these wherein is profit to thee and to others, then shalt thou have my son. And if thou chuse that wherein is no profit to thee, nor to any other, soothly thou shalt not marry him."

When the maiden heard this, she lifted up her hands to God, and said: "Thou, Lord, that knowest all things, grant me grace this hour so to chuse that I may receive the Emperor's son."

And with that she beheld the first vessel of gold, which was engraven royally, and read the superscription: *Whoso chuseth me shall find that he deserveth*; saying thus: "Though this vessel be full precious and made of pure gold, nevertheless I know not what is within; therefore, my dear lord, this vessel will I not chuse."

And then she beheld the second vessel, that was of pure silver, and read the superscription, *Whoso chuseth me shall find that his nature desireth*: Thinking thus within herself, if I chuse this vessel, what is within I know not, but well I know, there shall I find that nature desireth, and my nature desireth the lust of the flesh, and therefore this vessel will I not chuse.

When she had seen these two vessels, and had given an answer as touching them, she beheld the third vessel of lead, and read the superscription, *Whoso chuseth me shall find that God hath disposed*: Thinking within herself, this vessel is not very rich, nor outwardly precious, yet the superscription saith, *Whoso chuseth me shall find that God hath disposed*: and without doubt God never disposeth any harm, therefore, by the leave of God, this vessel will I chuse.

When the Emperor heard this, he said: "O fair maiden, open thy vessel, for it is full of precious stones, and see if thou hast well chosen or no."

And when this young lady had opened it, she found it full of fine gold and precious stones, as the Emperor had told her before.

Then said the Emperor: " Daughter, because thou hast well chosen thou shalt marry my son."

And then he appointed the wedding day ; and they were married with great solemnity, and with much honour continued to their lives' end.

“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THE HUMBLING OF JOVINIAN

WHEN Jovinian was Emperor, he possessed very great power ; and as he lay in bed reflecting upon the extent of his dominions, his heart was elated to an extraordinary degree. “Is there,” he impiously asked, “is there any other god than I ?” Amid such thoughts he fell asleep.

In the morning he reviewed his troops, and said, “My friends, after breakfast we will hunt.” Preparations being made accordingly, he set out with a large retinue. During the chase, the Emperor felt such extreme oppression from the heat that he believed his very existence depended upon a cold bath. As he anxiously looked around, he discovered a sheet of water at no great distance.

“Remain here,” said he to his guard, “until I have refreshed myself in yonder stream.” Then, spurring his steed, he rode hastily to the edge of the water. Alighting, he divested himself of his apparel, and experienced the greatest pleasure from its invigorating freshness and coolness. But whilst he was thus employed, a person similar to him in every respect—in countenance and gesture—arrayed himself unperceived in the Emperor’s dress, and then, mounting his horse, rode off to the attendants. The resemblance to the sovereign was such that no doubt was entertained of the reality ; and when the sport was over command was issued for their return to the palace.

Jovinian, however, having quitted the water, sought in every possible direction for his horse and clothes, and to his utter astonishment could find neither. Vexed beyond measure at the circumstance (for he was completely naked, and saw no one near to assist him), he began to reflect upon what course he should pursue.

“Miserable man that I am,” said he, “to what a strait am I reduced ! There is, I remember, a knight residing close by, whom I have promoted to a military post ; I will go to him and command his attendance and service. I will then ride on to the palace and strictly investigate the cause of this extraordinary occurrence.”

Jovinian proceeded, naked and ashamed, to the castle of the

aforesaid knight, and beat loudly at the gate. The porter inquired the cause of the knocking.

"Open the gate," said the enraged Emperor, "and you will see who I am."

The gate was opened; and the porter, struck with the strange appearance he exhibited, replied, "In the name of all that is marvellous, what are you?"

"I am," said he, "Jovinian, your Emperor; go to your lord, and command him from me to supply the wants of his sovereign. I have lost both horse and clothes."

"Thou liest, infamous ribald!" shouted the porter; "just before thy approach the Emperor Jovinian, accompanied by the officers of his household, entered the palace. My lord both went and returned with him; and but even now sat with him at meat. But because thou hast called thyself the Emperor, my lord shall know of thy presumption."

The porter entered, and related what had passed. Jovinian was introduced, but the knight retained not the slightest recollection of his master, although the Emperor remembered him.

"Who are you?" said the former, "and what is your name?"

"I am the Emperor Jovinian," rejoined he; "canst thou have forgotten me? At such a time I promoted thee to a military command."

"Why, thou most audacious scoundrel," said the knight, "darest thou call thyself the Emperor? I rode with him myself to the palace, from whence I am this moment returned. But thy impudence shall not go without its reward. Flog him," said he, turning to his servants, "flog him soundly, and drive him away."

This sentence was immediately executed, and the poor Emperor, bursting into a convulsion of tears, exclaimed, "Oh, my God, is it possible that one whom I have so much honoured and exalted should do this? Not content with pretending ignorance of my person, he orders these merciless villains to abuse me!"

He next thought within himself, "There is a certain duke, one of my privy councillors, to whom I will make known my calamity. At least, he will enable me to return decently to the palace."

To him, therefore, Jovinian proceeded, and the gate was opened at his knock. But the porter, beholding a naked man, exclaimed in the greatest amaze, "Friend, who are you, and why come you here in such a guise?"

He replied, "I am your Emperor; I have accidentally lost my clothes and my horse, and I have come for succour to your lord. I beg you, therefore, to do me this errand to the Duke."

The porter, more and more astonished, entered the hall, and communicated the strange intelligence which he had received.

"Bring him in," said the Duke. He was brought in, but neither did he recognise the person of the Emperor.

"What art thou?" he asked.

"I am the Emperor," replied Jovinian, "and I have promoted thee to riches and honour, since I made thee a duke and one of my councillors."

"Poor mad wretch!" said the Duke; "a short time since I returned from the palace, where I left the very Emperor thou assumest to be. But since thou hast claimed such rank, thou shalt not escape unpunished. Carry him to prison, and feed him with bread and water."

The command was no sooner delivered than obeyed; and the following day his naked body was submitted to the lash, and he was again cast into the dungeon.

Thus afflicted, he gave himself up to the wretchedness of his untoward condition. In the agony of his heart, he said, "What shall I do? Oh, what will be my destiny? I am loaded with the coarsest contumely, and exposed to the malicious observation of my people. It were better to hasten immediately to my palace, and there discover myself—my servants will know me; and even if they do not, my wife will know me!"

Escaping, therefore, from his confinement, he approached the palace and beat upon the gate.

"Who art thou?" said the porter.

"It is strange," replied the aggrieved Emperor, "it is strange that thou shouldst not know me; thou, who has served me so long!"

"Served *thee*!" returned the porter indignantly, "thou liest abominably. I have served none but the Emperor."

"Why," said the other, "thou knowest that I am he. Yet, though you disregard my words, go, I implore you, to the Empress; communicate what I will tell thee, and by these signs bid her send the imperial robes, of which some rogue has deprived me. The signs I tell thee of are known to none but to ourselves."

"In verity," said the porter, "thou art mad: at this very moment my lord sits at table with the Empress herself. Nevertheless, out of regard for thy singular merits, I will intimate thy declaration within; and rest assured, thou wilt presently find thyself most royally beaten."

The porter went accordingly, and related what he had heard. But the Empress became very sorrowful, and said, "Oh, my lord, what am I to think? The most hidden passages of our lives are revealed by an obscene fellow at the gate, and repeated to me by the porter, on the strength of which he declares himself the Emperor and my espoused lord!"

When the fictitious monarch was apprised of this, he commanded him to be brought in. He had no sooner entered than a large dog, which couched upon the hearth, and had been much cherished by him, flew at his throat, and, but for timely prevention, would have killed him. A falcon, also, seated upon her perch, no sooner beheld him than she broke her jesses and flew out of the hall. Then the pretended Emperor, addressing those who stood about him, said, "My friends, hear what I will ask of yon ribald. Who are you? and what do you want?"

"These questions," said the suffering man, "are very strange. You know I am the Emperor and master of this place."

The other, turning to the nobles who sat or stood at the table, continued, "Tell me, on your allegiance, which of us two is your lord and master?"

"Your Majesty asks us an easy thing," replied they, "and need not to remind us of our allegiance. That obscene wretch we have never before seen. You alone are he whom we have known from childhood; and we entreat that this fellow may be severely punished, as a warning to others how they give scope to their mad presumption."

Then turning to the Empress, the usurper said, "Tell me, my lady, on the faith you have sworn, do you know this man who calls himself thy lord and Emperor?"

She answered, "My lord, how can you ask such a question? Have I not known thee more than thirty years, and borne thee many children? Yet, at one thing I do marvel. How can this fellow have acquired so intimate a knowledge of what has passed between us?"

The pretended Emperor made no reply, but, addressing the real one, said, "Friend, how darest thou to call thyself Emperor? We sentence thee, for this unexampled impudence, to be drawn, without loss of time, at the tail of a horse. And if thou utterest the same words again, thou shalt be doomed to an ignominious death."

He then commanded his guards to see the sentence put in force, but to preserve his life. The unfortunate Emperor was now almost distracted; and, urged by his despair, wished vehemently for death.

"Why was I born?" he exclaimed. "My friends shun me; and my wife and children will not acknowledge me. But there is my confessor, still. To him will I go; perhaps he will recollect me, because he has often received my confessions."

He went accordingly, and knocked at the window of his cell.

"Who is there?" said the confessor.

"The Emperor Jovinian," was the reply; "open the window, and I will speak to thee."

The window was opened ; but no sooner had the confessor looked out than he closed it again in great haste.

"Depart from me," said he, "accursed thing : thou art not the Emperor, but the devil incarnate." #

This completed the miseries of the persecuted man ; and he tore his hair, and plucked up his beard by the roots.

"Woe is me ! " he cried, "for what strange doom am I reserved?" At this crisis, the impious words which, in the arrogance of his heart, he had uttered, crossed his recollection. Immediately he beat again at the window of the confessor's cell, and exclaimed, "For the love of Him who was suspended from the cross, hear my confession with the window closed."

The recluse said, "I will do this with pleasure" ; and then Jovinian acquainted him with every particular of his past life ; and principally how he had lifted himself up against his Maker, saying that he believed there was no other god but himself.

The confession made, and absolution given, the recluse opened the window, and directly knew him. "Blessed be the most high God," said he, "now do I know thee. I have here a few garments : clothe thyself, and go to the palace. I trust that they also will recognise thee."

The Emperor did as the confessor directed. The porter opened the gate, and made a low obeisance to him. "Dost thou know me ? " said he.

"Very well, my lord ! " replied the menial ; "but I marvel that I did not observe you go out."

Entering the hall of his mansion, Jovinian was received by all with a profound reverence. The strange Emperor was at that time in another apartment with the Queen ; and a certain knight came out of the chamber, looked narrowly at Jovinian, and returning to the supposed Emperor, said, "My lord, there is one in the hall to whom everybody bends ; he so much resembles you that we know not which is the Emperor."

Hearing this, the usurper said to the Empress, "Go and see if you know him."

She went, and returned greatly surprised at what she saw. "Oh, my lord," said she, "I declare to you that I know not whom to trust."

"Then," returned he, "I will go and determine you." When he had entered the hall, he took Jovinian by the hand and placed him near him. Addressing the assembly, he said, "By the oaths you have taken, declare which of us is your Emperor."

The Empress answered, "It is incumbent on me to speak first ; but Heaven is my witness that I am unable to determine which is he."

•

And so said all. Then the feigned Emperor spoke thus : “ My friends, hearken ! That man is your King and your Lord. He exalted himself to the disparagement of his Maker ; and God therefore scourged and hid him from your knowledge. I am the angel that watches over his soul, and I have guarded his kingdom while he was undergoing his penance. But his repentance removes the rod ; he has now made ample satisfaction ; and again let your obedience wait upon him. Commend yourselves to the protection of Heaven.”

So saying, he disappeared. The Emperor gave thanks to God, and lived happily, and finished his days in peace.

APPLICATION

My beloved, the Emperor represents any one whom the pride and vanity of life wholly engross. The knight to whom Jovinian first applied is Reason ; which ever disclaims the pomps and fooleries of life. The duke is conscience, the savage dog is the flesh, which alarms the falcon, that is, divine grace. The wife is the human soul ; the clothes in which the Emperor was at last arrayed are the virtues that befit the true sovereign, that is, the good Christian.

“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THE THREE MAXIMS

DOMITIAN was a very wise and just prince, and suffered no offender to escape. It happened that as he once sat at table, a certain merchant knocked at the gate. The porter opened it, and asked what he pleased to want.

“I have brought some useful things for sale,” answered the merchant. The porter introduced him; and he very humbly made obeisance to the Emperor.

“My friend,” said the latter, “what merchandise have you to dispose of?”

“Three maxims of especial wisdom and excellence, my lord.”

“And how much will you take for your maxims?”

“A thousand florins.”

“And so,” said the Emperor, “if they are of no use to me, I lose my money?”

“My lord,” answered the merchant, “if the maxims do not stand you in stead, I will return the money.”

“Very well,” said the Emperor; “let us hear your maxims.”

“The first, my lord, is this—‘Whatever you do, do wisely, and think of the consequences.’ The second is—‘Never leave the *highway* for a *byway*.’ And, thirdly, ‘Never stay all night as a guest in that house where you find the master an old man, and his wife a young woman.’ These three maxims, if you attend to them, will be extremely serviceable.”

The Emperor, being of the same opinion, ordered him to be paid a thousand florins; and so pleased was he with the first, that he commanded it to be inscribed in his court, in his bed-chamber, and in every place where he was accustomed to walk; and even upon the tablecloths of the palace. Now, the rigid justice of the Emperor occasioned a conspiracy among a number of his subjects; and finding the means of accomplishing their purposes somewhat difficult, they engaged a barber, by large promises, to cut his throat as he shaved him. When the Emperor, therefore, was to be shaved, the barber lathered his beard, and began to operate upon it; but casting his eyes over the towel which he had fastened round the royal neck, he perceived woven thereon—“Whatever you do, do

wisely, and think of the consequences."

The inscription startled the tonsor, and he said to himself : " I am to-day hired to destroy this man ; if I do it, my end will be ignominious ; I shall be condemned to the most shameful death. Therefore, whatsoever I do, it is good to consider the end, as the writing testifies."

These cogitations disturbed the worthy tonsor so much that his hand trembled, and the razor fell to the ground. The Emperor seeing this, inquired the cause.

" Oh, my lord," said the barber, " have mercy upon me : I was hired this day to destroy you ; but accidentally, or rather by the will of God, I read the inscription on the towel, ' Whatever you do, do wisely, and think of the consequences.' Whereby, considering that, of a surety, the consequence would be my own destruction, my hand trembled so much, that I lost all command over it."

" Well," thought the Emperor, " this first maxim hath assuredly saved my life : in a good hour was it purchased. My friend," said he to the tonsor, " on condition that you be faithful hereafter, I pardon you."

The noblemen, who had conspired against the Emperor, finding that their project had failed, consulted with one another what they were to do next.

" On such a day," said one, " he journeys to a particular city ; we will hide ourselves in a bypath, through which he will pass, and so kill him."

The counsel was approved. The Emperor, as had been expected, prepared to set out ; and riding on till he came to the bypath, his knights said :

" My lord, it will be better for you to go this way, than to pass along the broad road ; it is considerably nearer."

The Emperor pondered the matter within himself. " The second maxim," thought he, " admonishes me never to forsake the highway for a byway. I will adhere to that maxim."

Then, turning to his soldiers, " I shall not quit the public road ; but you, if it please ye, may proceed by that path, and prepare for my approach."

Accordingly a number of them went ; and the ambush, imagining that the Emperor rode in their company, fell upon them and put the greater part to the sword. When the news reached the Emperor, he secretly exclaimed, " My second maxim hath also saved my life."

Now the conspirators again took counsel, and said among themselves :

" On a certain day he will lodge in a particular house, where all the nobles lodge, because there is no other fit for his reception. Let us then agree with the master of that house and his wife, for a sum of

money, then to kill the Emperor as he lies in bed."

This was agreed to. But when the Emperor had come into the house, he commanded his host to be called into his presence. Observing that he was an old man, the Emperor said, "Have you not a wife?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I wish to see her."

The lady came; and when it appeared that she was very young, the Emperor said hastily to his chamberlain: "Away, prepare me a bed in another house. I will remain here no longer."

"My lord," replied he, "be it as you please. But they have made everything ready for you: were it not better to lie where you are, for in the whole city there is not so commodious a place?"

"I tell you," answered the Emperor, "I will sleep elsewhere."

The chamberlain, therefore, removed; and the Emperor went privately to another residence, saying to the soldiers about him:

"Remain here, if you like; but join me early in the morning."

Now, while they slept, the old man and his wife arose, being bribed to kill the Emperor in his sleep, and put to death all the soldiers who had remained. In the morning the Emperor found his soldiers slain. "Oh," cried he, "if I had continued here I should have been destroyed. So the third maxim hath also preserved me."

But the old man and his wife, with the whole of their family, were crucified. The Emperor retained the three maxims in memory during life, and ended his days in peace.

APPLICATION

My beloved, the Emperor is any good Christian; the porter is free will. The merchant represents our Lord Jesus Christ. The florins are virtues, and the maxims received for them are the grace and favour of God. The highway is the ten commandments; the byway, a bad life; those who lay in ambush are heretics. The old man is the world, and his wife is vanity. The conspirators are devils.

“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THE KNIGHTS OF EGYPT AND BALDAC

PETRUS ALPHONSUS relates a story of two knights, of whom one dwelt in Egypt and the other in Baldac (Bagdad). Messengers often passed between them; and whatever there was curious in the land of Egypt, the knight of that country sent to his friend, and he, in like manner, sent back an equivalent. Thus much kindness was manifested on both sides. But neither had ever seen the other.

As the knight of Baldac once lay upon his bed, he held the following soliloquy:

“My correspondent in Egypt has discovered much friendship for me; but I have never yet seen him: I will go and pay him a visit.”

Accordingly, he hired a ship and went into Egypt; and his friend, hearing of his arrival, met him by the way, and received him with much pleasure. Now, the knight had a very beautiful girl in his house, with whom the knight of Baldac was so smitten, that he fell sick and pined away.

“My friend,” said the other, “what is the matter with you?”

“My heart,” returned his comrade, “has fixed itself upon one of the women of your household, and unless I may espouse her I shall die.”

Upon this, all the household, save the individual in question, were summoned before him; and having surveyed them, he exclaimed, “I care little or nothing for these. But there is one other whom I have not seen; and her my soul loveth.”

At last this girl was shown to him. He protested that it was to her alone that he must owe his life.

“Sir,” said his friend, “I brought this girl up with the intention of making her my wife; and I shall obtain much wealth with her. Nevertheless, so strong is my affection for you, that I give her to you with all the riches which should have fallen to my share.”

The sick knight, overjoyed at his good fortune, received the lady and the money, and returned with her to Baldac.

After a while the knight of Egypt became so extremely indigent that he possessed no habitation. “I had better,” thought he, “go

to my friend of Baldac, to him whom I enriched, and inform him of my wants."

He did so ; and reached Baldac a while after sunset. " It is night," said he to himself ; " if I go now to my friend's house, he will not know me, for I am so poorly dressed. I, who once used to have a large household about me, am now desolate and destitute. To-night, therefore, I will rest, and on the morrow will go to his mansion."

Happening to look toward a burial-ground, he observed the gates of a church thrown open, and here he determined to remain for the night. But while he was endeavouring to compose himself to sleep, in a court of that place there entered two men, who engaged in battle ; and one was slain. The murderer instantly fled to the burial-ground, and escaped on the other side. By and by an extraordinary clamour penetrated through the whole city.

" Where is the murderer ? Where is the traitor ? " was the general cry.

" I am he," said our knight ; " take me to crucifixion."

They laid hands on him and led him away to prison. Early the next morning the city bell rang, and the judge sentenced him to be crucified. Amongst those who followed to witness his execution was the knight whom he had befriended ; and the former, seeing him led towards the cross, knew him at once.

" What ! " cried he, " shall he be crucified, and I live ? "

Shouting, therefore, with a loud voice, he said, " My friends ! destroy not an innocent man. I am the murderer, and not he."

Satisfied with his declaration, they immediately seized him and brought both to the cross. When they were near the place of execution, the real murderer, who happened to be present, thought thus :

" I will not permit innocent blood to be shed : the vengeance of God will sooner or later overtake me, and it is better to suffer a short pain in this world than subject myself to everlasting torments in the next."

Then, lifting up his voice : " My friends ! for God's sake, slay not the guiltless. The dead man was killed without premeditation, and without the knowledge of either of these men. I only am the murderer ; let these men go."

The crowd hearing what he said, instantly apprehended and brought him with no little amazement to the judge. The judge,—seeing the reputed criminals along with them, asked with surprise why they had returned. They related what had occurred ; and the judge, addressing the first knight, said, " Friend, why did you confess yourself the murderer ? "

" My lord," answered he, " I will tell you without deceit. In my

own land I was rich ; and everything that I desired I had. But I lost all this ; and possessing neither house nor home, I was ashamed and sought in this confession to obtain a remedy. I am willing to die ; and for Heaven's love command me to be put to death."

The judge then, turning to the knight of Baldac—" And you, my friend ! why did you avow yourself the murderer ? "

" My lord," replied he, " this knight bestowed upon me a wife, whom he had previously educated for himself, with an infinite store of wealth. When, therefore, I perceived my old and valued friend reduced to such an extremity, and saw him led rudely to the cross, I proclaimed myself the murderer. For his love I would willingly perish."

" Now then," said the judge to the real homicide, " what have you to say for yourself ! "

" I have told the truth," answered he. " It would have been a heavy crime, indeed, had I permitted two innocent men to perish by my fault, and I therefore prefer to undergo the penalty here, than to be punished at some other time, or perhaps in hell."

" Well," returned the judge, " since you have declared the truth and saved the lives of the innocent, study to amend your future life ; for this time I pardon you—go in peace."

The people unanimously applauded the decision of the judge in acquitting the guilty person, whose magnanimity had rescued two innocent persons from death.

APPLICATION

My beloved, the Judge is God ; the two knights, Christ and our first parent. The beautiful girl is the soul. The dead man is the spirit destroyed by the flesh.

“GESTA ROMANORUM”

THE FAITHFUL KNIGHT, OR, GUIDO AND TYRIUS

IN the reign of a certain King of England, there were two knights, one of whom was called Guido, and the other Tyrius. The former engaged in many wars, and always triumphed. He was enamoured of a beautiful girl of noble family, but whom he could not prevail upon to marry him, until he had encountered many enemies for her sake. At last, at the conclusion of a particular exploit, he gained her consent, and married her with great splendour. On the third night succeeding their nuptials, about cock-crowing, he arose from his bed to look upon the sky ; and amongst the most lustrous stars he clearly distinguished our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “ Guido, Guido ! you have fought much and valiantly for the love of a woman ; it is now time that you should encounter My enemies with equal resolution.”

Having so said, our Lord vanished. Guido, therefore, perceiving that it was His pleasure to send him to the Holy Land, to avenge Him upon the infidels, returned to his wife. “ I go to the Holy Land ; should Providence bless us with a child, attend carefully to its education until my return.”

The lady, startled at these words, sprung up from the bed as one distracted, and catching a dagger, which was placed at the head of the couch, cried out : “ Oh, my lord, I have always loved you, and looked forward with anxiety to our marriage, even when you were in battle, and spreading your fame over all the world ; and will you now leave me ? First will I stab myself with this dagger.”

Guido arose, and took away the weapon. “ My beloved,” said he, “ your words alarm me. I have vowed to God that I will visit the Holy Land. The best opportunity is the present, before old age come upon me. Be not disturbed ; I will soon return.”

Somewhat comforted with this assurance, she presented to him a ring. “ Take this ring, and as often as you look upon it in your pilgrimage, think of me. I will await with patience your return.”

The knight bade her farewell, and departed in company with Tyrius. As for the lady, she gave herself up to her sorrows for many

days, and would not be consoled. In due time she brought forth a son of extreme beauty, and tenderly watched over his infant years.

Guido and Tyrius, in the meanwhile, passed through many countries, and heard at last that the kingdom of Dacia had been subdued by the infidels. "My friend," said Guido to his associate, "do you enter this kingdom; and since the King of it is a Christian, assist him with all your power; I will proceed to the Holy Land; and when I have combated against the foes of Christ, I will return to you, and we will joyfully retrace our steps to England."

"Whatever pleases you," replied his friend, "shall please me. I will enter this kingdom; and if you live, come to me. We will return together to our country."

Guido promised; and exchanging kisses, they separated with much regret. The one proceeded to the Holy Land, and the other to Dacia. Guido fought many battles against the Saracens, and was victorious in all; so that his fame flew to the ends of the earth. Tyrius, in like manner, proved fortunate in war, and drove the infidels from the Dacian territory. The King loved and honoured him above all others, and conferred on him great riches. But there was at that time a savage nobleman, called Plebeus, in whose heart the prosperity of Tyrius excited an inordinate degree of hate and envy. He accused him to the King of treason, and malevolently insinuated that he designed to make himself master of the kingdom. The King credited the assertion, and ungratefully robbed Tyrius of all the honours which his bounty had conferred. Tyrius, therefore, was reduced to extreme want, and had scarcely the common sustenance of life. Thus desolate, he gave free course to his griefs; and exclaimed in great tribulation, "Wretch that I am! what will become of me?"

While he was taking a solitary walk in sorrow, Guido, journeying alone in the habit of a pilgrim, met him by the way, and knew him, but was not recognised by his friend. He, however, presently remembered Tyrius, and retaining his disguise, approached him, and said, "My friend, from whence are you?"

"From foreign parts," answered Tyrius, "but I have now been many years in this country. I had once a companion in arms, who proceeded to the Holy Land; but if he be alive or dead I know not, nor what have been his fortunes."

"For the love of thy companion, then," said Guido, "suffer me to rest my head upon your lap, and sleep a little, for I am very weary."

He assented, and Guido fell asleep.

Now, while he slept, his mouth stood open; and as Tyrius looked, he discovered a white weasel pass out of it, and run towards a neighbouring mountain, which it entered. After remaining there a short space, it returned, and again ran down the sleeper's throat. Guido

straightway awoke, and said, "My friend, I have had a wonderful dream ! I thought a weasel went out of my mouth, and entered yon mountain, and after that returned."

"Sir," answered Tyrius, "what you have seen in a dream I beheld with my own eyes. But what that weasel did in the mountain, I am altogether ignorant."

"Let us go and look," observed the other ; "perhaps we may find something useful."

Accordingly, they entered the place which the weasel had been seen to enter, and found there a dead dragon filled with gold. There was a sword also, of peculiar polish, and inscribed as follows : "BY MEANS OF THIS SWORD, GUIDO SHALL OVERCOME THE ADVERSARY OF TYRIUS."

Rejoiced at the discovery, the disguised pilgrim said, "My friend, the treasure is thine, but the sword I will take into my own possession."

"My lord," he answered, "I do not deserve so much gold ; why should you bestow it upon me ?"

"Raise your eyes," said Guido. "I am your friend !"

Hearing this, he looked at him more narrowly ; and when he recollected his heroic associate, he fell upon the earth for joy, and wept exceedingly. "It is enough ; I have lived enough now that I have seen you."

"Rise," returned Guido, "rise quickly ; you ought to rejoice rather than weep at my coming. I will combat your enemy, and we will proceed honourably to England. But tell no one who I am."

Tyrius arose, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. He then collected the gold, and hastened to his home ; but Guido knocked at the gate of the King's palace. The porter inquired the cause, and he informed him that he was a pilgrim newly arrived from the Holy Land. He was immediately admitted, and presented to the King, at whose side sat the invidious nobleman who had deprived Tyrius of his honours and wealth. "Is the Holy Land at peace ?" inquired the monarch.

"Peace is now firmly established," replied Guido, "and many have been converted to Christianity."

King. Did you see an English knight there, called Guido, who has fought so many battles ?

Guido. I have seen him often, my lord, and have eaten with him.

King. Is any mention made of the Christian Kings ?

Guido. Yes, my lord ; and of you also. It is said that the Saracens and other infidels had taken possession of your kingdom and that from their thralldom you were delivered by the valour of a noble knight, named Tyrius, afterwards promoted to great honour and riches. It is likewise said that you unjustly deprived this same

Tyrius of what you had conferred, at the malevolent instigation of a knight called Plebeus.

Plebeus. False pilgrim ! since thou presumest to utter these lies, hast thou courage enough to defend them ? If so, I offer thee battle. That very Tyrius would have dethroned the King. He was a traitor, and therefore lost his honours.

Guido (to the King). My lord, since he has been pleased to say that I am a false pilgrim, and that Tyrius is a traitor, I demand the combat. I will prove upon his body that he lies.

King. I am well pleased with your determination ; nay, I entreat you not to desist.

Guido. Furnish me with arms, then, my lord.

King. Whatever you want shall be got ready for you.

The King then appointed a day of battle ; and fearing lest the pilgrim Guido should in the meantime fall by treachery, he called to him his daughter, a virgin, and said, " As you love the life of that pilgrim, watch over him, and let him want for nothing."

In compliance, therefore, with her father's wish, she brought him into her own chamber, bathed him, and supplied him with every requisite. On the day of battle Plebeus armed himself, and standing at the gate, exclaimed, " Where is that false pilgrim ? Why does he tarry ?"

Guido, hearing what was said, put on his armour, and hastened to the lists. They fought so fiercely, that Plebeus would have died had he not drunk. Addressing his antagonist, he said, " Good pilgrim, let me have one draught of water."

" I consent," answered Guido, " provided you faithfully promise to use the same courtesy to me, should I require it."

" I promise," replied the other. Having quenched his thirst, he rushed on Guido, and they continued the battle with redoubled animosity. By and by, however, Guido himself thirsted, and required the same courtesy to be shown him as he had exhibited.

" I vow to Heaven," answered his enemy, " that you shall taste nothing, except by the strong hand."

At this ungrateful return, Guido, defending himself as well as he could, approached the water, leaped in, and drank as much as he wished. Then springing out, he rushed upon the treacherous Plebeus like a raging lion, who at last sought refuge in flight. The King, observing what passed, caused them to be separated, and to rest for that night, that in the morning they might be ready to renew the contest. The pilgrim then re-entered his chamber, and received from the King's daughter all the kindness it was in her power to display. She bound up his wounds, prepared supper, and placed him upon a strong wooden pallet. Wearied with the exertions of the day, he fell asleep.

•

Now, Plebeus had seven sons, all strong men. He sent for them, and spoke thus : " My dear children, I give you to understand that, unless this pilgrim be destroyed to-night, I may reckon myself among the dead to-morrow. I never looked upon a braver man."

" My dear father," said one, " we will presently get rid of him."

About midnight, therefore, they entered the girl's chamber, where the pilgrim slept, and beneath which the sea flowed. They said to one another, " If we destroy him in bed, we are not better than dead men ; let us toss him, bed and all, into the sea. It will be thought that he has fled."

This scheme was approved ; and accordingly they took up the sleeping warrior, and hurled him into the waves. He slept on, however, without perceiving what had happened. The same night a fisherman, following his occupation, heard the fall of the bed, and by the light of the moon saw him floating upon the water. Much surprised, he called out, " In the name of God, who are you ? Speak, that I may render assistance, before the waves swallow you up."

Guido, awoke by the clamour, arose, and perceiving the sky and stars above, and the ocean beneath, wondered where he was. " Good friend," said he to the fisherman, " assist me, and I will amply reward you. I am the pilgrim who fought in the lists ; but how I got hither, I have no conception."

The man, hearing this, took him into his vessel, and conveyed him to his house, where he rested till the morning.

The sons of Plebeus, in the meanwhile, related what they thought the end of the pilgrim, and bade their parent discard his fear. The latter, much exhilarated, arose, and armed himself ; and going to the gate of the palace, called out, " Bring forth that pilgrim, that I may complete my revenge."

The King commanded his daughter to awake and prepare him for battle. Accordingly, she went into his room, but he was not to be found. She wept bitterly, exclaiming that some one had conveyed away her treasure ; and the surprise occasioned by the intelligence was not less when it became known that his bed was also missing. Some said that he had fled ; others, that he was murdered. Plebeus, however, continued his clamour at the gate. " Bring out your pilgrim ; to-day I will present his head to the King."

Now, while all was bustle and inquiry in the palace, the fisherman made his way to the royal seat, and said, " Grieve not, my lord, for the loss of the pilgrim. Fishing last night in the sea, I observed him floating upon a bed. I took him on board my vessel, and he is now asleep at my house."

This news greatly cheered the King, and he immediately sent to him to prepare for a renewal of the contest. But Plebeus, terrified, and apprehensive of the consequence, besought a truce. This was

denied, even for a single hour. Both, therefore, re-entered the lists, and each struck twice; but at the third blow Guido cut off his opponent's arm, and afterwards his head. He presented it to the King, who evinced himself well satisfied with the event; and hearing that the sons of Plebeus were instruments in the meditated treachery, he caused them to be crucified. The pilgrim was loaded with honours, and offered immense wealth if he would remain with the King, which he resolutely declined. Through him Tyrius was reinstated in his former dignity, and recompensed for his past suffering. He then bade the King farewell.

"Good friend," returned the monarch, "for the love of Heaven, leave me not ignorant of your name."

"My lord," answered he, "I am that Guido of whom you have often heard."

Overjoyed at this happy discovery, the King fell upon his neck, and promised him a large part of his dominions if he would remain. But he could not prevail; and the warrior, after returning his friendly salutation, departed.

Guido embarked for England, and hastened to his own castle. He found a great number of paupers standing about his gate; and amongst them, habited as a pilgrim, sat the Countess, his wife. Every day did she thus minister to the poor, bestowing a penny upon each, with a request that he would pray for the safety of her husband Guido, that once more, before death, she might rejoice in his presence. It happened, on the very day of his return, that his son, now seven years of age, sat with his mother among the mendicants, sumptuously apparelled. When he heard his mother address the person who experienced her bounty in the manner mentioned above, "Mother," said he, "is it not my father whom you recommend to the prayers of these poor people?"

"It is, my son," replied she, "the third night following our marriage he left me, and I have never seen him since."

Now, as the lady walked among her dependents, who were ranged in order, she approached her own husband Guido, and gave him alms—but she knew not who he was. He bowed his head in acknowledgment, fearful lest his voice should discover him. As the Countess walked, her son followed; and Guido raising his eyes and seeing his offspring, whom he had not before seen, he could not contain himself. He caught him in his arms, and kissed him. "My darling child," said he, "may the Lord give thee grace to do that which is pleasing in His eyes."

The damsels of the lady, observing the emotion and action of the pilgrim, called to him and bade him stand there no longer. He approached his wife's presence, and without making himself known, entreated of her permission to occupy some retired place in the

neighbouring forest ; and she, supposing that he was the pilgrim he appeared to be, for the love of God and of her husband built him a hermitage, and there he remained a long time. But being on the point of death, he called his attendant, and said, "Go quickly to the countess ; give her that ring, and say that if she wishes to see me, she must come hither with all speed."

The messenger went accordingly, and delivered the ring. As soon as she had seen it, she exclaimed, "It is my lord's ring !" and with a fleet foot hurried into the forest.

But Guido was dead. She fell upon the corpse, and with a loud voice cried, "Woe is me ! my hope is extinct !" and then with sighs and lamentations continued, "Where are now the alms I distributed in behalf of my lord ? I beheld my husband receive my gifts with his own hands, and knew him not. And as for thee " (apostrophizing the dead body), "thou sawest thy child, and touchedst him. Thou didst kiss him, and yet revealedst not thyself to me ! What hast thou done ? Oh, Guido ! Guido ! never shall I see thee more !"

She sumptuously interred his body ; and bewailed his decease for many days.

APPLICATION

My beloved, the knight represents Christ ; the wife is the soul, and Tyrius is man in general. The weasel typifies John and the other prophets, who predicted the coming of Christ. The mountain is the world. The dead dragon is the old law, and the treasure within it is the ten commandments. The sword is authority ; the King's daughter, the Virgin Mary. The seven sons of Plebeus are seven mortal sins ; the fisherman is the Holy Ghost.

SWEDISH 14TH CENTURY

THE WEREWOLF

THERE was once a King, who ruled over a large kingdom. He was married to a beautiful Queen, by whom he had only one child, a daughter. Hence it naturally followed that the little one was to her parents as the apple of their eye, and was dear to them beyond all other things, so that they thought of nothing with such delight as of the pleasure they should have in her when she grew up. But much falls out contrary to expectation ; for before the Princess was out of her childhood, the Queen, her mother, fell sick and died.

Now, it is easy to imagine that there was sadness not only in the royal court, but over the whole kingdom, for the Queen was greatly beloved by all. The King himself was so deeply afflicted that he resolved never to marry again, but placed all his comfort and joy in the little Princess.

In this manner a considerable time passed on ; the young Princess grew from day to day taller and fairer, and everything she at any time desired was by her father immediately granted her ; many attendants being placed about her, for the sole purpose of being at hand to execute all her commands. Among these there was a woman who had been previously married, and had two daughters. She was of an agreeable person, and had a persuasive tongue, so that she well knew how to put her words together ; added to all which she was as soft and pliant as silk ; but her heart was full of artifices and all kinds of falsehood.

No sooner was the Queen dead than she began to devise plans how she might become consort to the King, and her daughters be honoured as King's daughters. With this object she began by winning the affection of the young Princess, praised beyond measure all that she said or did, and all her talk ended in declaring how happy they would be if the King would take to himself a new wife. On this subject the conversation oftenest turned both early and late, till at length the Princess could not believe otherwise than that all the woman said was true. She therefore asked her what description of

wife it were most desirable that the King should select. The woman, in many words, all sweet as honey, answered :

" Ill would it become me to give an opinion in such a case, hoping only he may choose for his Queen one who will be kind to my little Princess. But this I know, that were I so fortunate as to be the object of his choice, I should think only of what might please the Princess ; and if she wished to wash her hands, one of my daughters should hold the basin, and the other hand her the towel."

This and much more she said to the Princess, who believed her, as children readily believe all that is told them is true.

Not a day now passed in which the King was free from the solicitations of his daughter, who incessantly besought him to marry the handsome waiting-woman ; but he would not. Nevertheless, the Princess would not desist from her entreaties, but spoke incessantly precisely as she had been taught by the false waiting-woman. One day, when she was talking in the same strain, the King broke forth :

" I see very well that it must at length be as you have resolved, greatly as it is against my wish ; but it shall be only on one condition."

" What is the condition ? " asked the Princess, overjoyed.

" It is," said the King, " that, as it is for your sake if I marry again, you shall promise me that if at any future time you shall be discontented with your stepmother or your stepsisters, I shall not be troubled with your complaints and grievances."

The Princess made the promise, and it was settled that the King should marry the waiting-woman, and make her Queen over all his realm.

As time passed on the King's daughter grew up to be the fairest maid in all the land ; while the Queen's daughters were as ugly in person as in disposition, so that no one had a good word for them. There could not, therefore, fail of being a number of young princes and knights, from both east and west, coming to demand the young Princess ; while not one vouchsafed to woo either of the Queen's daughters. At this the stepmother was sorely vexed at heart, however she might conceal her feelings, being, to all outward appearance, as smooth and humble as before. Among the suitors there was a king's son from a distant country, who was both young and valorous, and as he passionately loved the Princess, she listened to his addresses, and plighted her faith to him in return.

The Queen observed all this with a jaundiced eye ; for she would fain have had the Prince marry one of her own daughters and therefore resolved that the young couple should never be united with each other. From that moment her thoughts were solely bent on the destruction both of them and their love.

An opportunity soon offered itself to her ; for just at that time intelligence was received that an enemy had invaded the country, so that the King was obliged to take the field. The Princess was now soon made to learn what kind of a stepmother she had got ; for hardly had the King departed before the Queen began to show her true disposition, so that she now was as cruel and malignant as she had previously appeared to be friendly and obliging. Not a day passed on which the Princess did not hear maledictions and hard words ; nor did the Queen's daughters yield to their mother in wickedness.

But a lot still more cruel awaited the young Prince, the lover of the Princess. While engaged in the chase he had lost his way, and got separated from his companions. Availing herself of the opportunity, the Queen practised on him her wicked arts, and transformed him into A WEREWOLF, so that for the remainder of his days he should be a prowler of the forest. When evening drew on, and the Prince did not appear, his men returned home ; and the sorrow may be easily imagined with which the Princess was overwhelmed when she was informed how the chase had terminated. She wept and mourned day and night, and would not be comforted. But the Queen laughed at her affliction, and rejoiced in her false heart that everything had turned out so agreeably to her wishes.

As the Princess was one day sitting alone in her maiden-bower, it entered her mind that she would visit the forest in which the young Prince had disappeared. She went, therefore, to her step-mother, and asked permission to go to the wood, that she might for a little while forget her heavy affliction. To her request the Queen would hardly give her consent, as she was always more inclined to say no than yes ; but the Princess besought her so earnestly that at last her stepmother could no longer withhold her permission, only ordering one of her daughters to accompany and keep watch over her.

A long dispute now arose between mother and daughters, neither of the stepsisters being willing to go with her, but excusing themselves, and asking what pleasure they could have in following her who did nothing but weep. The matter ended by the Queen insisting that one of her daughters should go with the Princess, however much it might be against her will. The maidens then strolled away from the palace and reached the forest, where the Princess amused herself with wandering among the trees and listening to the song of the little birds, and thinking on the friend she loved so dearly, and whom she now had lost ; the Queen's daughter following all the while, with a heart full of rancorous feeling for the Princess and her grief.

After having wandered about for some time they came to a small

cottage that stood far in the dark forest. At the same moment the Princess was seized with a burning thirst, and entreated her step-sister to accompany her to the cottage, that she might get a draught of water. At this the Queen's daughter became only more ill-humoured, and said :

" Is it not enough that I follow you up and down in the wild wood? Now, because you are a Princess, you require me to go into such a filthy nest. No, my foot shall never enter it. If you will go, go alone."

The Princess took no long time to consider, but did as her step-sister said, and entered the cabin. In the little apartment she saw an aged woman sitting on a bench, who appeared so stricken with years that her head shook. The Princess saluted her, as was her wont, in a friendly tone, with " Good evening, good mother ! may I ask you for a little drink of water ? "

" Yes, and right welcome," answered the old woman. " Who are you that come under my humble roof with so kind a greeting ? "

The Princess told her that she was the King's daughter, and had come out to divert herself, with the hope, in some degree, of forgetting her heavy affliction.

" What affliction have you, then ? " asked the old woman.

" Well may I grieve," answered the Princess, " and never more feel joyful. I have lost my only friend, and God alone knows whether we shall ever meet again."

She then related to the old woman all that had taken place, while the tears flowed from her eyes in such torrents that no one could have refrained from pitying her.

When she had concluded, the old woman said : " It is well that you have made your grief known to me ; I have experienced much, and can, perhaps, give you some advice. When you go from hence you will see a lily growing in the field. This lily is not like other lilies, but has many wonderful properties. Hasten, therefore, to pluck it. If you can do so, all will be well ; for then there will come one who will tell you what you are to do."

They then parted ; the Princess, having thanked her, continued her walk, and the old woman remained sitting on her bench and shaking her head. But the Queen's daughter had been standing during the whole time outside the door, murmuring and fretting that the Princess stayed so long.

When she came out she had to hear much chiding from her step-sister, as was to be expected ; but to this she gave very little heed, thinking only how she should find the flower of which the old woman had spoken. She therefore proceeded farther into the forest, and in the selfsame moment her eye fell on a spot where there stood a

beautiful white lily in full bloom before her. On seeing it she was so glad, so glad, and instantly ran to gather it, but it vanished on a sudden and appeared again at some distance.

The Princess was now eager beyond measure, and no longer gave heed to the voice of her stepsister, but continued running; though every time she put forth her hand to take the flower it was already away, and immediately afterwards reappeared at a short distance farther off. Thus it continued for a considerable time, and the Princess penetrated farther and farther into the dense forest, the lily all the while appearing and vanishing, and again showing itself, and every time looking taller and more beautiful than before. In this manner the Princess at length came to a high mountain, when, on casting her eyes up to the summit, there stood the flower on the very edge, as brilliant and fair as the brightest star. She now began to climb up the mountain, caring for neither the stocks nor the stones that lay in the way, so great was her ardour. When she at length had gained the mountain's top, lo! the lily no longer moved but continued stationary. The Princess then stooped and plucked it, and placed it in her bosom, and was so overjoyed that she forgot both stepsister and everything in the world besides.

For a long time the Princess could not sufficiently feast her eyes with the sight of the beautiful flower. It then on a sudden entered her mind what her stepmother would say, when she returned home, for having stayed out so long. She looked about her before returning to the palace, but on casting a glance behind her she saw that the sun had gone down, and that only a strip of day yet tarried on the mountain's summit; while down before her the forest appeared so dark and gloomy that she did not trust herself to find the way through it.

She was now exceedingly weary and exhausted, and saw no alternative but that she must remain for the night where she was. Sitting then down on the rock, she placed her hand under her cheek and wept, and thought on her wicked stepmother and stepsisters, and all the bitter words she must hear when she returned home, and on the King, her father, who was absent, and on the beloved of her heart, whom she should never see again; but abundantly as her tears flowed she noticed them not, so absorbing was her affliction. Night now drew on, all was shrouded in darkness, the stars rose and set, but the Princess still continued sitting on the same spot, weeping without intermission. While thus sitting, lost in thought, she heard a voice greeting her with "Good evening, fair maiden! Why do you sit here so lonely and sorrowful?"

She started, and was greatly surprised, as may easily be imagined; and on looking back there stood a little, little old man, who nodded and looked so truly benevolent. She answered:

"I may well be sorrowful, and never more be glad. I have lost my best beloved, and have, moreover, missed my path in the forest, so that I am fearful of being devoured by the wild beasts."

"Oh," said the old man, "don't be disheartened for that. If you will obey me in all that I say, I will help you."

To this the Princess readily assented, seeing herself forsaken by the whole world besides. The old man then drew forth a flint and steel, and said: "Fair maiden! now, in the first place, you shall kindle a fire."

The King's daughter did as she was desired, gathered moss, twigs, and dry wood, and kindled a fire on the mountain's brow. When she had done this the old man said to her: "Go now farther on the mountain, and you will find a pot full of tar: bring it hither."

The Princess did so. The old man continued: "Now set the pot on the fire."

The Princess did so. "When, now, the tar begins to boil," said the old man, "cast your white lily into the pot."

This seemed to the Princess a very hard command, and she prayed earnestly that she might retain her lily; but the old man said: "Have you not promised to obey me in all that I desire? Do as I tell you; you will not repent."

The Princess then, with eyes averted, cast the lily into the boiling pot, although it grieved her to the heart; so dear to her was the beautiful flower.

At the same instant a hollow roaring was heard from the forest, like the cry of a wild beast, which came nearer and nearer, and passed into a hideous howl, so that the mountain re-echoed on every side. At the same time was heard a crackling and rustling among the trees, the bushes gave way, and the Princess beheld a huge grey wolf come rushing out of the forest just opposite to the spot where they were sitting.

In her terror she would gladly have fled from it; but the old man said: "Make haste, run to the brow of the mountain, and the moment the wolf comes before you, empty the tar-pot over him."

The Princess, although so terrified that she was hardly conscious of what she did, nevertheless followed the old man's direction, and poured the tar over the wolf, just as he came running towards her. But now a wonderful event took place, for scarcely had she done so when the wolf changed his covering, the great grey skin started off from him, and, instead of a ravenous wild beast, there stood a comely youth with eyes directed towards the brow of the mountain; and when the Princess had so far recovered from her fright that she could look on him, whom did she behold before her but her own best be-

loved, who had been transformed into a werewolf !

Now let any one, who can, imagine what the feelings of the Princess were at this moment. She stretched out her arms towards him, but could neither speak nor answer, so great were her surprise and joy. But the Prince ran up the mountain and embraced her with all the ardour of the truest affection, and thanked her for having restored him. Nor did he forget the little old man, but thanked him in many kind words for his powerful aid. They then sat down on the mountain-top and conversed lovingly with each other.

The Prince related how he had been changed into a wolf, and all the privations he had suffered while he had to range about the forest, and the Princess recounted to him her sorrow and all the tears she had shed during his absence. Thus they sat throughout the night, heedless of the passing hour, until the stars began gradually to retire before the daylight, so that the surrounding objects were visible. When the sun had risen they perceived that a wide road ran from the foot of the hill quite up to the royal palace. Then said the old man : " Fair maiden, turn about. Do you see anything yonder ? "

" Yes," answered the Princess, " I see a horseman on a foaming horse ; he rides along the road at full speed."

" That," said the old man, " is a messenger from the King, your father. He will follow forthwith with his whole army."

Now was the Princess glad beyond measure, and wished instantly to descend to meet her father ; but the old man held her back, saying, " Wait : it is yet too soon. Let us first see how things will turn out."

After some time the sun shone bright, so that its rays fell on the palace down before them. Then said the old man : " Fair maiden, turn about. Do you see anything yonder ? "

" Yes," answered the Princess, " I see many persons coming out of my father's palace, some of whom proceed along the road, while others hasten towards the forest."

The old man said : " They are your stepmother's servants. She has sent one party to meet the King and bid him welcome ; but the other is going to the forest in search of you."

At hearing this the Princess was troubled, and was with difficulty induced to remain, but wished to go down to the Queen's people ; but the old man held her back, saying, " Wait yet a little while ; we will first see how things turn out."

For some time the Princess continued with her looks directed towards the road by which the King was to come. Then said the old man again : " Fair maiden, turn about. Do you observe anything yonder ? "

•

"Yes," answered the Princess, "there is a great stir in my father's palace; and see! now they are busy in hanging the whole palace with black."

The old man said: "That is your stepmother and her servants. They wish to make your father believe that you are dead."

At this the Princess was filled with anxiety, and prayed fervently, saying, "Let me go, let me go, that I may spare my father so great an affliction."

But the old man detained her, saying, "No, wait. It is still too soon. We will first see how things turn out."

Again another interval passed, the sun rose high in the heaven, and the air breathed warm over field and forest; but the royal children and the little old man continued sitting on the mountain where we left them. They now observed a small cloud slowly rising in the horizon, which grew larger and larger, and came nearer and nearer along the road; and as it moved they saw that it glittered with weapons, and perceived helmets nodding and banners waving, heard the clanking of swords and the neighing of horses, and at length recognised the royal standard. Now it is easy to imagine that the joy of the Princess exceeded all bounds, and that she only longed to go and greet her father. But the old man held her back saying, "Turn about, fair maiden, do you see nothing at the King's palace?"

"Yes," answered the Princess, "I see my stepmother and my stepsisters coming out clad in deep mourning, and holding white handkerchiefs to their faces, and weeping bitterly."

The old man said, "Thy are now pretending to mourn for your death; but wait awhile, we have yet to see how things will turn out."

Some time after, the old man asked again, "Fair maiden, turn about. Do you observe anything yonder?"

"Yes," answered the Princess, "I see them come bearing a black coffin. Now my father orders it to be opened. And see! the Queen and her daughters fall on their knees, and my father threatens them with his sword."

The old man said, "The King desired to see your corpse, and so your wicked stepmother has been forced to confess the truth."

On hearing this, the Princess entreated fervently: "Let me go, let me go, that I may console my father in his great affliction."

But the old man still detained her, saying, "Attend to my counsel, and stay here a little while. We have not yet seen how everything will terminate."

Another interval passed, and the Princess, and the Prince, and the little old man still continued sitting on the mountain. Then said the old man, "Turn about, fair maiden. Do you observe anything yonder?"

"Yes," answered the Princess, "I see my father, and my step-mother, and my stepsisters coming this way with all their attendants."

The old man continued, "They have now set out in search of you. Go down now, and bring the wolfskin which is lying below."

The King's daughter did so, and the old man then said, "Place yourself on the brink of the mountain."

The Princess did so, and at the same moment perceived the Queen and her daughters coming along the road just beneath the mountain where they were sitting.

"Now," said the old man, "cast the wolfskin straight down." The Princess obeyed, and cast the wolfskin as the old man had directed. It fell exactly over the wicked Queen and her two daughters. But now a wonderful event took place, for hardly had the skin touched the three women than they changed their guise, gave a hideous howl, and were transformed into three fierce werewolves, which at full speed rushed into the wild forest.

Scarcely had this taken place before the King himself with all his men came to the foot of the mountain. When he looked up and beheld the Princess, he could not at first believe his eyes, but stood immovable, thinking it was a spectre. The old man then cried "Fair maiden, hasten now down and gladden the heart of your father."

The Princess did not wait to be told a second time, but, taking her lover by the hand, was in an instant at the mountain's foot. When they reached the spot where the King was standing, the Princess fell on her father's breast and wept for joy; the young Prince also wept; even the King himself shed tears, and to every one present their meeting was a delightful spectacle. Great joy was there and many embracings, and the Princess related all she had suffered from her stepmother and stepsisters, and all about her beloved Prince, and the little old man who had so kindly assisted them. But when the King turned to thank him he had already vanished, and no one could ever say either who he was or whither he went.

The King and all his suite now returned to the palace, on their way towards which much was said both about the little old man and what the Princess had undergone. On reaching home the King ordered a sumptuous banquet to be prepared, to which he invited all the most distinguished and exalted persons of his kingdom, and bestowed his

daughter on the young Prince ; and their nuptials were celebrated with games and rejoicings for many days. And I, too, was at the feastings ; and as I rode through the forest I was net by a wolf with two young ones ; they were ravenous, and seemed to suffer much. I have since learned that they were no other than the wicked step-mother and her two daughters.

ICELANDIC
14TH CENTURY

THE STORY OF FRITHIOF
THE BOLD

Of King Beli and Thorstein Vikingson and their Children

THUS beginneth the tale, telling how that King Beli ruled over Sogn-land ; three children had he, whereof Helgi was his first son, and Halfdan his second, but Ingibiorg his daughter. Ingibiorg was fair of face and wise of mind, and she was ever accounted the foremost of the King's children.

Now a certain strand went west of the firth, and a great stead was thereon, which was called Baldur's Meads ; a Place of Peace was there, and a great temple, and round about it a great garth of pales ; many gods were there, but amidst them all was Baldur held of most account. So jealous were the heathen men of this stead, that they would have no hurt done therein to man nor beast, nor might any man have dealings with a woman there.

Snowstrand was the name of that stead whereat the King dwelt ; but on the other side the firth was an abode named Foreness, where dwelt a man called Thorstein, the son of Viking ; and his stead was over against the King's dwelling.

Thorstein had a son by his wife called Frithiof ; he was the tallest and strongest of men, and more furnished of all prowess than any other man, even from his youth up. Frithiof the Bold was he called, and so well beloved was he, that all prayed for good things for him.

Now the King's children were but young when their mother died ; but a goodman of Sogn, named Hilding, prayed to have the King's daughter to foster ; so there was she reared well and heedfully ; and she was called Ingibiorg the Fair. Frithiof also was fostered of goodman Hilding, wherefore was he foster-brother to the King's daughter, and they two were peerless among children.

Now King Beli's chattels began to ebb fast away from his hands, for he was grown old.

Thorstein had rule over the third part of the realm, and in him lay the King's greatest strength.

Every third year Thorstein feasted the King at exceeding great cost, and the King feasted Thorstein the two years between.

Helgi, Beli's son, from his youth up turned much to blood-offering; neither were those brethren well-beloved.

Thorstein had a ship called *Ellidi*, which pulled fifteen oars on either board; it ran up high stem and stern, and was strong-built like an ocean-going ship, and its bulwarks were clamped with iron.

So strong was Frithiof that he pulled the two bow oars of *Ellidi*; but either oar was thirteen ells long, and two men pulled every oar elsewhere.

Frithiof was deemed peerless amid the young men of that time, and the King's sons envied him, whereas he was more praised than they.

Now King Beli fell sick; and when the sickness lay heavy on him he called his sons to him and said to them: "This sickness will bring me to mine end, therefore will I bid you this, that ye hold fast to those old friends that I have had; for meseems in all things ye fall short of that father and son, Thorstein and Frithiof, yea, both, in good counsel and in hardihood. A mound ye shall raise over me."

So with that Beli died.

Thereafter Thorstein fell sick; so he spake to Frithiof: "Kinsman," says he, "I will crave this of thee, that thou bow thy will before the King's sons, for their dignity's sake; yet doth my heart speak goodly things to me concerning thy fortune. Now would I be laid in my mound over against King Beli's mound, down by the sea on this side the firth, whereas it may be easiest for us to cry out each to each of tidings drawing nigh."

A little after this Thorstein departed, and was laid in mound even as he had bidden; but Frithiof took the land and chattels after him. Biorn and Asmund were Frithiof's foster-brethren; they were big and strong men both.

II

Frithiof wooeth Ingibiorg of those Brethren

So Frithiof became the most famed of men, and the bravest in all things that may try a man.

Biorn, his foster-brother, he held in most account of all, but Asmund served the twain of them.

The ship *Ellidi*, he gat, the best of good things, of his father's heritage, and another possession therewith—a gold ring; no dearer was in Norway.

So bounteous a man was Frithiof withal, that it was the talk of

most that he was a man of no less honour than those brethren, but it were for the name of king ; and for this cause they held Frithiof in hate and enmity, and it was a heavy thing to them that he was called greater than they ; furthermore they thought they could see that Ingibiorg, their sister, and Frithiof were of one mind together.

It befell hereon that the kings had to go to a feast to Frithiof's house at Foreness ; and there it happened according to wont that he gave to all men beyond that they were worthy of. Now Ingibiorg was there, and she and Frithiof talked long together ; and the King's daughter said to him : " A goodly gold ring hast thou."

" Yea, in good sooth," said he.

Thereafter went those brethren to their own home, and greater grew their enmity of Frithiof.

A little after grew Frithiof heavy of mood, and Biorn, his foster-brother, asked him why he fared so.

He said he had it in his mind to woo Ingibiorg. " For though I be named by a lesser name than those brethren, yet am I not fashioned lesser."

" Even so let us do then," quoth Biorn. So Frithiof fared with certain men unto those brethren ; and the kings were sitting on their father's mound when Frithiof greeted them well, and then set forth his wooing, and prayed for their sister Ingibiorg, the daughter of Beli.

The kings said : " Not otherwise is this thine asking, whereas thou wouldst have us give her to one who lacketh dignity ; wherefore we gainsay thee this utterly."

Said Frithiof : " Then is mine errand soon sped ; but in return never will I give help to you henceforward, nay, though ye need it never so much."

They said they heeded it nought ; so Frithiof went home, and was joyous once more.

III

Of King Ring and those Brethren

There was a king named Ring, who ruled over Ringrealm, which also was in Norway ; a mighty folk-king he was, and a great man, but come by now unto his latter days.

Now he spake to his men : " Lo, I have heard that the sons of King Beli have brought to nought their friendship with Frithiof, who is the noblest of men ; wherefore will I send men to these kings, and bid them choose whether they will submit them to me and pay me tribute, or else that I bring war on them ; and all things shall then lie ready to my hand to take, for they have neither might nor wisdom

to withstand me ; yet great fame were it to my old age to overcome them."

After that fared the messengers of King Ring, and found those brethren, Helgi and Halfdan, in Sogn, and spake to them thus : " King Ring sends bidding to you to send him tribute or else will he war against your realm."

They answered and said that they would not learn in the days of their youth what they would be loth to know in their old age, even how to serve King Ring with shame. " Nay, now shall we draw together all the folk that we may."

Even so they did ; but now, when they beheld their force that it was but little, they sent Hilding their fosterer to Frithiof to bid him come help them against King Ring. Now Frithiof sat at the knave-play when Hilding came thither, who spake thus : " Our kings send thee greeting, Frithiof, and would have thy help in battle against King Ring, who cometh against their realm with violence and wrong."

Frithiof answered him nought, but said to Biorn, with whom he was playing : " A bare place in thy board, foster-brother, and nowise mayst thou amend it ; nay, for my part I shall beset thy red piece there, and wot whether it be safe."

Then Hilding spake again :

" King Helgi bade me say thus much, Frithiof, that thou shouldst go on this journey with them, or else look for ill at their hands when they at the last come back."

" A double game, foster-brother," said Biorn ; " and two ways to meet thy play."

Frithiof said : " Thy play is to fall first on the knave, yet the double game is sure to be."

No other outcome of his errand had Hilding ; he went back speedily to the kings, and told them Frithiof's answer.

They asked Hilding what he made out of those words. He said : " Whereas he spake of the bare place he will have been thinking of the lack in his journey of yours ; but when he said he would beset the red piece, that will mean Ingibjorg, your sister ; so give ye all the heed ye may to her. But whereas I threatened him with ill from you, Biorn deemed the game a double one ; but Frithiof said that the knave must be set on first, speaking thereby of King Ring."

So then the brethren arrayed them for departing ; but ere they went, they let bring Ingibjorg and eight women with her to Baldur's Meads, saying that Frithiof would not be so mad rash as to go see her thither, since there was none who durst make riot there.

Then fared those brethren south to Jadar, and met King Ring in the Sogn-Sound.

Now, herewith was King Ring most of all wroth that the brothers

had said that they accounted it a shame to fight with a man so old that he might not get a-horseback unholpen.

IV

Frithiof goes to Baldur's Meads

Straightway whenas the kings were gone away Frithiof took his raiment of state and set the goodly gold ring on his arm ; then went the foster-brethren down to the sea and launched *Ellidi*. Then said Biorn : " Whither away, foster-brother ? "

" To Baldur's Meads," said Frithiof, " to be glad with Ingibiorg."

Biorn said : " A thing unmeet to do, to make the gods wroth with us."

" Well, it shall be risked this time," said Frithiof ; " and withal, more to me is Ingibiorg's grace than Baldur's grame."

Therewith they rowed over the firth, and went up to Baldur's Meads and to Ingibiorg's bower, and there she sat with eight maidens, and the newcomers were eight also.

But when they came there, lo, all the place was hung with cloth of pall and precious webs.

Then Ingibiorg arose and said :

" Why art thou so overbold, Frithiof, that thou art come here without leave of my brethren to make the gods angry with thee ? "

Frithiof says : " Howsoever that may be, I hold thy love of more account than the gods' hate."

Ingibiorg answered : " Welcome art thou here, thou and thy men ! "

Then she made place for him to sit beside her, and drank to him in the best of wine ; and thus they sat and were merry together.

Then beheld Ingibiorg the goodly ring on his arm, and asked him if that precious thing were his own. Frithiof said Yea, and she praised the ring much. Then Frithiof said :

" I will give thee the ring if thou wilt promise to give it to no one, but to send it to me when thou no longer shalt have will to keep it ; and hereon shall we plight troth each to other."

So with this troth-plighting they exchanged rings.

Frithiof was oft at Baldur's Meads a-night time, and every day between whiles would he go thither to be glad with Ingibiorg.

V

Those Brethren come Home again

Now tells the tale of those brethren, that they met King Ring, and he had more folk than they ; then went men betwixt them, and

sought to make peace, so that no battle should be ; thereto King Ring assented on such terms that the brethren should submit them to him, and give him in marriage Ingibiorg their sister, with the third part of all their possessions.

The kings said Yea thereto, for they saw that they had to do with overwhelming might ; so the peace was fast bound by oaths, and the wedding was to be at Sogn whenas King Ring should go see his betrothed.

So those brethren fare home with their folk, right ill content with things. But Frithiof, when he deemed that the brethren might be looked for home again, spake to the King's daughter :

" Sweetly and well have ye done to us, neither has goodman Baldur been wroth with us ; but now as soon as ye wot of the kings' coming home, spread the sheets of your beds abroad on the Hall of the Goddesses, for that is the highest of all the garth, and we may see it from our stead."

The King's daughter said : " Thou dost not after the like of any other ; but certes, we welcome dear friends whenas ye come to us." So Frithiof went home ; and the next morning he went out early, and when he came in then he spake and sang :

" Now must I tell
To our good men
That over and done
Are our fair journeys ;
No more a-shipboard
Shall we be going,
For there are the sheets
Spread out a-bleaching."

Then they went out, and saw that the Hall of the Goddesses was all thatched with white linen. Biorn spake and said : " Now are the kings come home, and but a little while have we to sit in peace, and good were it, mescems, to gather folk together."

So did they, and men came flocking thither.

Now the brethren soon heard of the ways of Frithiof and Ingibiorg, and of the gathering of men. So King Helgi spake :

" A wondrous thing how Baldur will bear what shame soever Frithiof and she will lay on him ! Now will I send men to him, and wot what atonement he will offer us, or else will I drive him from the land, for our strength seemeth to me not enough that we should fight with him as now."

So Hilding, their fosterer, bare the King's errand to Frithiof and his friends, and spake in such wise : " This atonement the kings will have of thee, Frithiof, that thou go gather the tribute of the Orkneys, which has not been paid since Beli died, for they need money,

whereas they are giving Ingibiorg their sister in marriage, and much of wealth with her."

Frithiof said : " This thing only somewhat urges us to peace, the goodwill of our kin departed ; but no trustiness will those brethren show herein. But this condition I make, that our lands be in good peace while we are away." So this was promised and all bound by oaths.

Then Frithiof arrays him for departing, and is captain of men brave and of good help, eighteen in company.

Now his men asked him if he would not go to King Helgi and make peace with him, and pray himself free from Baldur's wrath.

But he answered : " Hereby I swear that I will never pray Helgi for peace."

Then he went aboard *Ellidi*, and they sailed out along the Sogn-firth.

But when Frithiof was gone from home, King Halfdan spake to Helgi his brother : " Better lordship and more had we if Frithiof had payment for his masterful deed ; now therefore let us burn his stead, and bring on him and his men such a storm on the sea as shall make an end of them."

Helgi said it was a thing meet to be done.

So then they burned up clean all the stead at Foreness and robbed it of all goods ; and after that sent for two witch-wives, Heidi and Hamglom, and gave them money to raise against Frithiof and his men so mighty a storm that they should all be lost at sea. So they sped the witch-song, and went up on the witch-mount with spells and sorcery.

VI

Frithiof sails for the Orkneys

So when Frithiof and his men were come out of the Songfirth there fell on them great wind and storm, and an exceeding heavy sea : but the ship drave on swiftly, for sharp-built she was, and the best to breast the sea.

So Frithiof now sang :

" Oft let I swim from Sogn
My tarred ship sooty-sided,
When maids sat o'er the mead-horn
Amidst of Baldur's Meadows :
Now while the storm is wailing
Farewell I bid you maidens,
Still shall ye love us, sweet ones,
Though *Ellidi* the sea fill."

Said Biorn : " Thou mightest well find other work to do than singing songs over the maids of Baldur's Meadows."

" Of such work shall I not speedily run dry, though," said Frithiof.

Then they bore up north to the sounds nigh those isles that are called Solundir, and therewith was the gale at its hardest.

Then sang Frithiof :

" Now is the sea a-swelling,
And sweepeth the rack onward ;
Spells of old days cast o'er us
Make ocean all unquiet ,
No more shall we be striving
'Mid storm with wash of billows,
But Solundir shall shelter
Our ship with ice-beat rock-walls."

So they lay to under the lee of the isles hight Solundir, and were minded to abide there ; but straightway thereon the wind fell : then they turned away from under the lee of the islands, and now their voyage seemed hopeful to them, because the wind was fair awhile : but soon it began to freshen again.

Then sang Frithiof :

" In days foredone
From Foreness strand
I rowed to meet
Maid Ingibjorg :
But now I sail
Through chilly storm
And wide away
My long-worm driveth "

And now when they were come far out into the main, once more the sea waxed wondrous troubled, and a storm arose with so great drift of snow, that none might see the stem from the stern : and they shipped seas, so that they must be ever a-baling. So Frithiof sang :

" The salt waves see we nought
As seaward drive we ever
Before the witch-wrought weather,
We well-famed kings'-defenders :
Here are we all a-standing,
With all Solundir hull-down,
Eighteen brave lads a-baling
Black *Ellhi* to bring home."

Said Biorn : " Needs must he who fareth far fall in with diverse hap."

"Yea, certes, foster-brother," said Frithiof. And he sang withal :

¶ Helgi it is that helpeth
The white-head billows' waxing ;
Cold time unlike the kissing
In the close of Baldur's Meadow !
So is the hate of Helgi
To that heart's love she giveth
O would that here I held her,
Gift high above all giving ! "

"Maybe," said Biorn, "she is looking higher than thou now art ; what matter when all is said ? "

"Well," says Frithiof, "now is the time to show ourselves to be men of avail, though blither tide it was at Baldur's Meadows."

So they turned to in manly wise, for there were the bravest of men come together in the best ship of the Northlands. But Frithiof sang a stave :

"So come in the West-sea
Nought see I the billows,
The sea-water seemeth
As sweeping of wild-fire
Topple the rollers,
Toss the hills swan-white,
Ellidr wallows
O'er steep of the wave-hills "

Then they shipped a huge sea, so that all stood a-baling. But Frithiof sang :

"With love-moved mouth the maiden
Me pledgeth though I founder
Ah ! bright sheets lay a-bleaching,
East there on brents the swan loves."

Biorn said : "Art thou of mind belike that the maids of Sogn will weep many tears over thee ? "

Said Frithiof : "Surely that was in my mind."

Therewith so great a sea broke over the bows, that the water came in like the in-falling of a river ; but it availed them much that the ship was so good, and the crew aboard her so hardy.

Now sang Biorn :

'No widow, methinks,
To thee or me drinks :
No ring-bearer fair
Biddeth draw near ;
Salt are our eyne
Soaked in the brine ;
Strong our arms are no more,
And our eyelids smart-sore."

Quoth Asmund: "Small harm though your arms be tried somewhat, for no pity we had from you when we rubbed our eyes whenas ye must needs rise early a-mornings to go to Baldur's Meadows."

"Well," said Frithiof, "why singest thou not, Asmund?"

"Not I," said Asmund; yet sang a ditty straightway:

"Sharp work about the sail was
When o'er the ship seas tumbled,
And there was I a-working
Within-board 'gainst eight balers;
Better it was to bower,
Bringing the women breakfast,
Than here to be 'mid billows
Black *Ellid* a-bahing."

"Thou accountest thy help of no less worth than it is?" said Frithiof, laughing therewith: "but sure it showeth the thrall's blood in thee that thou wouldst fain be awaiting at table."

Now it blew harder and harder yet, so that to those who were aboard liker to huge peaks and mountains than to waves seemed the sea-breakers that crashed on all sides against the ship.

Then Frithiof sang:

"On bolster I sat
In Baldur's Mead erst,
And all songs that I could
To the king's daughter sang;
Now on Ran's bed belike
Must I soon be a-lying,
And another shall be
By Ingibjorg's side."

Biorn said: "Great fear lieth ahead of us, foster-brother, and now dread hath crept into thy words, which is ill with such a good man as thou."

Says Frithiof: "Neither fear nor fainting is it, though I sing now of those our merry journeys; yet perchance more hath been said of them than need was: but most men would think death surer than life, if they were so bested as we be."

"Yet shall I answer thee somewhat," said Biorn, and sang:

"Yet one gain have I gotten
Thou gatst not 'mid thy fortune,
For meet play did I make me
With Ingibjorg's eight maidens:
Red rings we laid together
Aright in Baldur's Meadow,
When far off was the warder
Of the wide land of Halfdan."

"Well," said he, "we must be content with things as they are, foster-brother."

Therewith so great a sea smote them, that the bulwark was broken and both the sheets and four men were washed overboard and all lost.

Then Frithiof sang :

"Both sheets are bursten
Amid the great billows,
Four swains are sunk
In the fathomless sea."

"Now, meseems," said Frithiof, "it may well be that some of us will go to the house of Ran, nor shall we deem us well sped if we come not thither in glorious array ; wherefore it seems good to me that each man of us here should have somewhat of gold on him."

Then he smote asunder the ring, Ingibjorg's gift, and shared it between all his men, and sang a stave withal :

"The red ring here I hew me
Once owned of Halfdan's father,
The wealthy lord of erewhile,
Or the sea waves undo us,
So on the guests shall gold be,
If we have need of guesting ;
Meet so for mighty men-folk
Amid Ran's hall to hold them "

"Not all so sure is it that we come there," said Biorn ; "and yet it may well be so."

Now Frithiof and his folk found that the ship had great way on her, and they knew not what lay ahead, for all was mirk on either board, so that none might see the stem or stern from amidships ; and therewith was there great drift of spray amid the furious wind, and frost, and snow, and deadly cold.

Now Frithiof went up to the masthead, and when he came down he said to his fellows : "A sight exceeding wondrous have I seen, for a great whale went in a ring about the ship, and I misdoubt me that we come nigh to some land, and that he is keeping the shore against us ; for certes King Helgi has dealt with us in no friendly wise, neither will this his messenger be friendly. Moreover, I saw two women on the back of the whale, and they it be who will have brought this great storm on us with the worst of spells and witchcraft ; but now we shall try which may prevail, my fortune or their devilry, so steer ye at your straightest, and I will smite these evil things with beams."

Therewith he sang a stave :

“ See I troll women
Twain on the billows,
E'en they whom Helgi
Hither has sent.
Ellidi now
Or ever her way stop
Shall smite the backs
Of these asunder ”

So tells the tale that this wonder went with the good ship *Ellidi*, that she knew the speech of man.

But Biorn said : “ Now may we see the treason of those brethren against us.” Therewith he took the tiller, but Frithiof caught up a forked beam, and ran into the prow, and sang a stave :

“ *Ellidi*, hail !
Leap high o'er the billows !
Break of the troll wives
Brow or teeth now !
Break cheek or jaw
Of the cursed woman,
One foot or twain
Of the ogress filthy.”

Therewith he drave his fork at one of the skin-changers, and the beak of *Ellidi* smote the other on the back, and the backs of both were broken ; but the whale took the deep, and gat him gone, and they never saw him after.

Then the wind fell, but the ship lay waterlogged ; so Frithiof called out to his men, and bade bale out the ship, but Biorn said :

“ No need to work now, verily ! ”

“ Be thou not afeard, foster-brother,” said Frithiof, “ ever was it the wont of good men of old time to be helpful while they might, whatsoever should come after.”

And therewith he sang a stave :

“ No need, fair fellows,
To fear the death-day,
Rather be glad,
Good men of mine :
For if dreams wot aught
All nights they say
I yet shall have
My Ingibiorg.”

Then they baled out the ship ; and they were now come nigh unto land ; but there was yet a flaw of wind in their teeth. So then did Frithiof take the two bow oars again, and rowed full mightily.

Therewith the weather brightened, and they saw that they were come out to Effia Sound, and so there they made land.

The crew were exceeding weary ; but so stout a man was Frithiof that he bore eight men a-land over the fore-shore, but Biorn bore two, and Asmund one. Then sang Frithiof :

“ Fast bare I up
To the fire-lit house
My men all dazed
With the drift of the storm :
And the sail moreover
To the sand I carried ,
With the might of the sea
Is there no more to do ”

VII

Frithiof at the Orkneys

Now Earl Angantyr was at Effia whenas Frithiof and his folk came a-land there. But his way it was, when he was sitting at the drink, that one of his men should sit at the watch-window, looking weatherward from the drinking-hall, and keep watch there. From a great horn drank he ever . and still as one was emptied another was filled for him. And he who held the watch when Frithiof came a-land was called Hallward ; and now he saw where Frithiof and his men went, and sang a stave :

“ Men see I a-baling
Amid the storm's might ;
Six bale on *Ellidi*,
Seven are a-rowing ,
Like is he in the stem,
Straining hard at the oars,
To Frithiof the bold,
The brisk in the battle.”

So when he had drunk out the horn, he cast it in through the window, and spake to the woman who gave him drink :

“ Take up from the floor,
O fair-going woman,
The horn cast adown
Drunk out to the end !
I behold men at sea
Who, storm-beaten, shall need
Help at our hands
Ere the haven they make.”

Now the Earl heard what Hallward sang ; so he asked for tidings, and Hallward said : “ Men are come a-land here, much forwearied,

yet brave lads belike : but one of them is so hardy that he beareth the others ashore."

Then said the Earl, "Go ye, and meet them, and welcome them in seemly wise : if this be Frithiof, the son of Hersir Thorstein, my friend, he is a man famed far and wide for all prowess."

Then there took up the word a man named Atli, a great viking, and he spake : "Now shall that be proven which is told of, that Frithiof hath sworn never to be first in the craving of peace."

There were ten men in company with him, all evil and outrageous, who often wrought berserksgang.

So when they met Frithiof they took to their weapons. But Atli said :

"Good to turn hither, Frithiof ! Clutching ernes should claw ; and we no less, Frithiof ! Yea, and now may'st thou hold to thy word, and not crave first for peace."

So Frithiof turned to meet them, and sang a stave :

"Nay, nay, in nought
Now shall ye cow us.
Blenching hearts,
Isle-abiders !
Alone with you ten
The fight will I try
Rather than pray
For peace at your hands."

Then came Hallward thereto, and spake :

"The Earl wills that ye all be made welcome here : neither shall any set on you."

Frithiof said he would take that with a good heart ; howsoever he was ready for either peace or war.

So thereon they went to the Earl, and he made Frithiof and all his men right welcome, and they abode with him, in great honour holden, through the wintertide, and oft would the Earl ask of their voyage : so Biorn sang :

"There baled we, wight fellows,
Washed over and over
On both boards
By billows ;
For ten days we baled there,
And eight thereunto."

The Earl said : "Well-nigh did the King undo you ; it is ill seen of such-like kings as are meet for nought but to overcome men by wizardry. But now I wot," says Angantyr, "of thine errand hither, Frithiof, that thou art sent after the scat : whereto I give thee a

speedy answer, that never shall King Helgi get scat of me, but to thee will I give money, even as much as thou wilt ; and thou mayest call it scat if thou hast a mind to, or whatso else thou wilt."

So Frithiof said that he would take the money.

VIII

King Ring weddeth Ingibiorg

Now shall it be told of what came to pass in Norway the while Frithiof was away ; for those brethren let burn up all the stead at Foreness. Moreover, while the weird sisters were at their spells they tumbled down from off their high witch-mount, and brake both their backs.

That autumn came King Ring north to Sogn to his wedding, and there at a noble feast drank his bridal with Ingibiorg.

" Whence came that goodly ring which thou hast on thine arm ? " said King Ring to Ingibiorg.

She said her father had owned it, but he answered and said :

" Nay, for Frithiof's gift it is : so take it off thine arm straight-way ; for no gold shalt thou lack whenas thou comest to Elfhome."

So she gave the ring to King Helgi's wife, and bade her give it to Frithiof when he came back.

Then King Ring wended home with his wife, and loved her with exceeding great love.

IX

Frithiof brings the Tribute to the Kings

The spring after these things Frithiof departed from the Orkneys and Earl Angantyr in all good liking ; and Hallward went with Frithiof.

But when they came to Norway they heard tell of the burning of Frithiof's stead.

So when he was gotten to Foreness, Frithiof said : " Black is my house waxen now ; no friends have been at work here." And he sang withal :

" Frank and free,
With my father dead,
In Foreness old
We drank aforetime.
Now my abode
Behold I burned ;
For many ill deeds
The kings must I pay."

Then he sought rede of his men what was to be done ; but they bade him look to it : then he said that the scat must first be paid out of hand. So they rowed over the firth to Snowstrand ; and there they heard that the kings were gone to Baldur's Meads to sacrifice to the gods ; so Frithiof and Biorn went up thither, and bade Hallward and Asmund break up meanwhile all ships, both great and small, that were anigh ; and they did so. Then went Frithiof and his fellow to the door of Baldur's Meads, and Frithiof would go in. Biorn bade him fare warily, since he must needs go in alone ; but Frithiof charged him to abide without, and keep watch ; and he sang a stave :

“ All alone go I
Unto the stead ;
No folk I need
For the finding of kings ;
But cast ye the fire
O'er the kings' dwelling,
If I come not again
In the cool of the even ”

“ Ah,” said Biorn, “ a goodly singing ! ”

Then went Frithiof in, and saw but few folk in the Hall of the Goddesses ; there were the kings at their blood-offering, sitting a-drinking ; a fire was there on the floor, and the wives of the kings sat thereby, a-warming the gods, while others anointed them, and wiped them with napkins.

So Frithiof went up to King Helgi and said : “ Have here thy scat ! ”

And therewith he heaved up the purse wherein was the silver, and drave it on to the face of the King ; whereby were two of his teeth knocked out, and he fell down stunned in his high seat ; but Halfdan got hold of him, so that he fell not into the fire. Then sang Frithiof :

“ Have here thy scat,
High Lord of the warriors !
Heed that and thy teeth,
Lest all tumble about thee !
Lo the silver abideth
At the bight of this bag here,
That Biorn and I
Betwixt us have borne thee ”

Now there were but few folk in the chamber, because the drinking was in another place ; so Frithiof went out straightway along the floor, and beheld therewith that goodly ring of his on the arm of Helgi's wife as she warmed Baldur at the fire ; so he took hold of the

ring, but it was fast to her arm, and he dragged her by it over the pavement towards the door, and Baldur fell from her into the fire ; then Halfdan's wife caught hastily at Baldur, whereby the god she was warming fell likewise into the fire ; and the fire caught both the gods, for they were anointed, and ran up thence into the roof, so that the house was all ablaze : but Frithiof got the ring to him ere he came out.

So then Biorn asked him what had come of his going in there ; but Frithiof held up the ring and sang a stave :

“ The heavy purse smote Helgi
Hard 'midst his scoundrel's visage :
Lowly bowed Halfdan's brother,
Fell bundling 'mid high seat ;
There Baldur fell a-burning,
But first my bright ring gat I.
Fast from the roaring fire
I dragged the best crone forward ”

Men say that Frithiof cast a firebrand up on to the roof, so that the hall was all ablaze, and therewith sang a stave :

“ Down stride we toward the sea-strand,
And strong deeds set a-going,
For now the blue flame bickers
Amidst of Baldur's Meadow.”

And therewith they went down to the sea.

X

Frithiof made an Outlaw

But as soon as King Helgi had come to himself he bade follow after Frithiof speedily, and slay them all, him and his fellows : “ A man of forfeit life, who spareth no Place of Peace ! ”

So they blew the gathering for the king's men, and when they came out to the hall they saw that it was afire ; so King Halfdan went thereto with some of the folk, but King Helgi followed after Frithiof and his men, who were by then gotten a-shipboard and were lying on their oars.

Now King Helgi and his men find that all the ships are scuttled, and they have to turn back to shore, and have lost some men : then waxed King Helgi so wroth that he grew mad, and he bent his bow, and laid an arrow on the string, and drew at Frithiof so mightily that the bow brake asunder in the midst.

But when Frithiof saw that, then he gat him to the two bow oars

of *Ellidi*, and laid so hard on them that they both brake, and with that he sang a stave :

" Young Ingibjorg
Kissed I aforetime,
Kissed Bel's daughter
In Baldur's Meadow
So shall the oars
Of *Ellidi*
Break both together
As Helgi's bow breaks."

Then the land-wind ran down the firth and they hoisted sail and sailed ; but Frithiof bade them look to it that they might have no long abiding there. And so withal they sailed out of the Sognfirth, and Frithiof sang :

" Sail we away from Sogn,
E'en as we sailed aforetime,
When flared the fire all over
The house that was my fathers'.
Now is the bale a-burning
Amidst of Baldur's Meadow :
But wend I as a wild-wolf,
Well wot I they have sworn it."

" What shall we turn to now, foster-brother ? " said Biorn.

" I may not abide here in Norway," said Frithiof : " I will learn the ways of warriors, and sail a-warring."

So they searched the isles and out-skeries the summer long, and gathered thereby riches and renown ; but in autumn-tide they made for the Orkneys, and Angantyr gave them good welcome, and they abode there through the winter-tide.

But when Frithiof was gone from Norway the kings held a Thing, whereat was Frithiof made an outlaw throughout their realm ; they took his lands to them, moreover, and King Halfdan took up his abode at Foreness, and built up again all Baldur's Meadow, though it was long ere the fire was slaked there. This misliked King Helgi most, that the gods were all burned up, and great was the cost or ever Baldur's Meadow was built anew fully equal to its first estate.

So King Helgi abode still at Snowstrand.

XI

Frithiof fareth to see King Ring and Ingibjorg

Frithiof waxed ever in riches and renown whithersoever he went : evil men he slew, and grimly strong-thieves, but husbandmen and chapmen he let abide in peace ; and now was he called anew Frithiof

the Bold ; he had gotten to him by now a great company well arrayed, and was becoming exceedingly wealthy of chattels.

But when Frithiof had been three winters a-warring he sailed west, and made the Wick ; then he said that he would go a-land : " But ye shall fare a-warring without me this winter ; for I begin to weary of warfare, and would fain go to the Uplands, and get speech of King Ring ; but hither shall ye come to meet me in the summer, and I will be here the first day of summer."

Biorn said : " This counsel is naught wise, though thou must needs rule ; rather would I that we fare north to Sogn, and slay both those kings, Helgi and Halfdan."

" It is all naught," said Frithiof ; " I must needs go to see King Ring and Ingibiorg."

Says Biorn : " Loth am I hereto that thou shouldst risk thyself alone in his hands ; for this Ring is a wise man and of great kin, though he be somewhat old."

But Frithiof said he would have his own way : " And thou, Biorn, shalt be captain of our company meanwhile."

So they did as he bade, and Frithiof fared to the Uplands in the autumn, for he desired sore to look upon the love of King Ring and Ingibiorg. But or ever he came there he did on him, over his clothes, a great cloak all shaggy ; two staves he had in his hand, and a mask over his face, and he made as if he were exceeding old.

So he met certain herdsmen, and, going heavily, he asked them : " Whence are ye ? "

They answered and said : " We are off Streitaland, whereas the King dwelleth."

Quoth the carle : " Is King Ring a mighty king then ? "

They answered : " Thou lookest to us old enough to have cunning to know what manner of man is King Ring in all wise."

The carle said that he had heeded salt-boiling more than the ways of kings ; and therewith he goes up to the King's house.

So when the day was well worn he came into the hall, blinking about as a dotard, and took an outward place, pulling his hood over him to hide his visage.

Then spake King Ring to Ingibiorg : " There is come into the hall a man far bigger than other men."

The Queen answered : " That is no such great tidings here."

But the King spake to a serving-man who stood before the board, and said : " Go thou, and ask yon cowed man who he is, whence he cometh, and of what kin he is."

So the lad ran down the hall to the new-comer and said : " What art thou called, thou man ? Where wert thou last night ? Of what kin art thou ? "

Said the cowed man : " Quick come thy questions, good fellow !

but hast thou skill to understand if I shall tell thee hereof ? ”

“ Yea, certes,” said the lad.

“ Well,” said the cowl-bearer, “ Thief is my name, with Wolf was I last night, and in Grief-ham was I reared.”

Then ran the lad back to the King, and told him the answer of the new-comer.

“ Well told, lad,” said the King ; “ but for that land of Grief-ham, I know it well ; it may well be that the man is of no light heart, and yet a wise man shall he be, and of great worth I account him.”

Said the Queen : “ A marvellous fashion of thine, that thou must needs talk so freely with every carle that cometh hither ! Yea, what is the worth of him, then ? ”

“ That wottest thou no clearer than I,” said the King ; “ but I see that he thinketh more than he talketh, and is peering all about him.”

Therewith the King sent a man after him, and so the cowl-bearer went up before the King, going somewhat bent, and greeted him in a low voice.

Then said the King : “ What art thou called, thou big man ? ”

And the cowl-bearer answered and sang :

“ PEACE-THIEF they called me
On the prow with the Vikings ;
But WAR-THIEF whenas
I set widows a-weeping ;
SPEAR-THIEF when I
Sent forth the barbed shafts ;
BATTLE-THIEF when I
Burst forth on the King ;
HEL-THIEF when I
Tossed up the small babies :
ISLE-THIEF when I
In the outer isles harried ,
SLAINS-THIEF when I
Sat aloft over men
Yet since have I drifted
With salt-boiling carles,
Needy of help
Ere hither I came ”

Said the King : “ Thou hast gotten thy name of Thief from many a matter, then ; but where wert thou last night, and what is thy home ? ”

The cowl-bearer said : “ In Grief-ham I grew up ; but heart drave me hither, and home have I nowhere.”

The King said : “ Maybe indeed that thou hast been nourished in Grief-ham a certain while ; yet also maybe that thou wert born in a place of peace. But in the wild wood must thou have lain last night, for no good-man dwelleth anigh named Wolf ; but whereas

thou sayest thou hast no home, so is it, that thou belike deemest thy home naught, because of thy heart that drave thee hither."

Then spake Ingibiorg: "Go, Thief, get thee to some other harbour, or in to the guest-hall."

"Nay," said the King, "I am old enow to know how to marshal guests; so do off thy cowl, new-comer, and sit down on my other hand."

"Yea, old, and over old," said the Queen, "when thou settest staff-carles by thy side."

"Nay, lord, it beseemeth not," said Thief; "better it were as the Queen sayeth. I have been more used to boiling salt than sitting beside lords."

"Do thou my will," said the King, "for I will rule this time."

So Thief cast his cowl from him, and was clad thereunder in a dark blue kirtle; on his arm, moreover, was the goodly gold ring, and a thick silver belt was round about him, with a great purse on it, and therein silver pennies glittering; a sword was girt to his side, and he had a great fur hood on his head, for his eyes were bleared, and his face all wrinkled.

"Ah! now we fare better, say I," quoth the King; "but do thou, Queen, give him a goodly mantle, well shapen for him."

"Thou shalt rule, my lord," said the Queen, "but in small account do I hold this Thief of thine."

So then he gat a good mantle over him, and sat down in the high-seat beside the King.

The Queen waxed red as blood when she saw the goodly ring, yet would she give him never a word; but the King was exceedingly blithe with him and said: "A goodly ring hast thou on thine arm there; thou must have boiled salt long enough to get it."

Says he: "That is all the heritage of my father."

"Ah!" says the King, "maybe thou hast more than that; well, few salt-boiling carles are thy peers, I deem, unless eld is deep in mine eyes now."

So Thief was there through the winter amid good entertainment, and well accounted of by all men; he was bounteous of his wealth, and joyous with all men: the Queen held but little converse with him; but the King and he were ever blithe together.

XII

Frithiof saves the King and Queen on the Ice

The tale tells that on a time King Ring and the Queen, and a great company, would go to a feast. So the King spake to Thief: "Wilt thou fare with us, or abide at home?"

He said he had liefer go ; and the King said : " Then am I the more content."

So they went on their ways, and had to cross a certain frozen water. Then said Thief : " I deem this ice untrustworthy ; meseemeth ye fare unwarily."

Quoth the King : " It is often shown how heedful in thine heart thou wilt be to us."

So a little after the ice broke in beneath them, and Thief ran thereto, and dragged the wain to him, with all that was therein ; and the King and the Queen both sat in the same : so Thief drew it all up on to the ice, with the horses that were yoked to the wain.

Then spake King Ring : " Right well drawn, Thief ! Frithiof the Bold himself would have drawn no stronger had he been here ; doughty followers are such as thou ! "

So they came to the feast, and there is naught to tell thereof, and the King went back again with seemly gifts.

XIII

The King sleeps before Frithiof

Now weareth away the mid-winter, and when spring cometh, the weather groweth fair, the wood bloometh, the grass groweth, and ships may glide betwixt land and land. So on a day the King says to his folk : " I will that ye come with us for our disport out into the woods, that we may look upon the fairness of the earth."

So did they, and went flock-meal with the King into the woods ; but so it befell, that the King and Frithiof were gotten alone together afar from other men, and the King said he was heavy, and would fain sleep. Then said Thief : " Get thee home, then, lord, for it better beseemeth men of high estate to lie at home than abroad."

" Nay," said the King, " so will I not do." And he laid him down therewith, and slept fast, snoring loud.

Thief sat close by him, and presently drew his sword from his sheath and cast it far away from him.

A little while after the King woke up, and said : " Was it not so, FRITHIOF, that a many things came into thy mind e'en now ? But well hast thou dealt with them, and great honour shalt thou have of me. Lo, now, I knew thee straightway the first evening thou camest into our hall : now nowise speedily shalt thou depart from us ; and somewhat great abideth thee."

Said Frithiof : " Lord King, thou hast done to me well, and in friendly wise ; but yet must I get me gone soon, because my company cometh speedily to meet me as I have given them charge to do."

So then they rode home from the wood, and the King's folk came

flocking to him, and home they fared to the hall and drank joyously ; and it was made known to all folk that Frithiof the Bold had been abiding there through the winter-tide.

XIV

King Ring's Gift to Frithiof

Early of a morning-tide one smote on the door of that hall, wherein slept the King and Queen, and many others : then the King asked who it was that called at the hall door ; and so he who was without said : " Here am I, Frithiof ; and I am arrayed for my departure."

Then was the door opened, and Frithiof came in, and sung a stave :

" Have great thanks for the guesting
Thou gavest with all bounty ;
Dight fully for wayfaring
Is the feeder of the eagle ;
But, Ingibiorg, I mind thee
While yet on earth we tarry ;
Love gloriously ! I give thee
This gift for many kisses."

And therewith he cast the goodly ring towards Ingibiorg, and bade her take it.

The King smiled at this stave of his, and said : " Yea, forsooth, she hath more thanks for thy winter quarters than I ; yet hath she not been more friendly to thee than I."

Then sent the King his serving-folk to fetch victuals and drink, and saith that they must eat and drink before Frithiof departed. " So arise, Queen, and be joyful ! " But she said she was loth to fall afeasting so early.

" Nay, we will eat all together," said King Ring, and they did so.

But when they had drunk a while King Ring spake : " I would that thou abide here, Frithiof ; for my sons are but children and I am old, and unmeet for the warding of my realm, if any should bring war against it."

Frithiof said : " Speedily must I be gone, lord." And he sang :

" Oh, live, King Ring,
Both long and hale !
The highest King
Neath heaven's skirt :
Ward well, O King,
Thy wife and land,
For Ingibiorg now
Nevermore shall I meet."

Then quoth King Ring :

" Fare not away,
O Frithiof, thus,
With downward heart,
O dearest of chieftains !
For now will I give thee
For all thy good gifts,
Far better things
Than thou wottest thyself."

And again he sang :

" To Frithiof the famous
My fair wife I give,
And all things therewith
That are unto me."

Then Frithiof took up the word and sang :

" Nay, how from thine hands
These gifts may I have,
But if thou hast fared
By the last way of fate ! "

The King said : " I would not give thee this, but that I deem it will soon be so, for I sicken now. But of all men I would that thou shouldst have the joy of this ; for thou art the crown of all Norway. The name of King will I give thee also ; and all this, because Ingibiorg's brethren would begrudge thee any honour ; and would be slower in getting thee a wife than I am."

Said Frithiof : " Have all thanks, lord, for thy goodwill beyond that I looked for ! but I will have no higher dignity than to be called Earl."

Then King Ring gave Frithiof rule over all his realm in due wise, and the name of Earl therewith ; and Frithiof was to rule it until such time as the sons of King Ring were of age to rule their own realm. So King Ring lay sick a little while, and then died ; and great mourning was made for him ; then was there a mound cast over him, and much wealth laid therein, according to his bidding.

Thereafter Frithiof made a noble feast, whereunto his folk came ; and thereat was drunken at one and the same time the heritage feast after King Ring, and the bridal of Frithiof and Ingibiorg.

After these things Frithiof abode in his realm, and was deemed therein a most noble man ; he and Ingibiorg had many children.

XV

Frithiof King in Sogn

Now those kings of Sogn, the brethren of Ingibiorg, heard these tidings, how that Frithiof had gotten a King's rule in Ringrealm, and had wedded Ingibiorg their sister. Then says Helgi to Halfdan, his brother, that unheard of it was, and a deed over-bold, that a mere Hersir's son should have her to wife ; and so thereat they gather together a mighty army, and go their ways therewith to Ringrealm, with the mind to slay Frithiof, and lay all his realm under them.

But when Frithiof was ware of this, he gathered folk, and spake to the Queen moreover : " New war is come upon our realm ; and now, in whatso wise the dealings go, fain am I that thy ways to me grow no colder."

She said : " In such wise have matters gone that I must needs let thee be the highest."

Now was Biorn come from the east to help Frithiof ; so they fared to the fight, and it befell, as ever erst, that Frithiof was the foremost in the peril : King Helgi and he came to handy-blows, and there he slew King Helgi.

Then bade Frithiof raise up the Shield of Peace, and the battle was stayed ; and therewith he cried to King Halfdan : " Two choices are in thine hands now, either that thou give up all to my will, or else gettest thou thy bane like thy brother ; for now may men see that mine is the better part."

So Halfdan chose to lay himself and his realm under Frithiof's sway ; and so now Frithiof became ruler over Sogn-folk, and Halfdan was to be Hersir in Sogn and pay Frithiof tribute, while Frithiof ruled Ringrealm. So Frithiof had the name of King of Sogn-folk from the time that he gave up Ringrealm to the sons of King Ring, and thereafter he won Hordaland also. He and Ingibiorg had two sons, called Gunnthiof and Hunthiof, men of might, both of them.

AND SO HERE ENDETH THE STORY OF FRITHIOF THE BOLD.

DANISH 14TH CENTURY

THE NESS KING

ABOUT four miles from Fredericia, where the village of Egeskov now is, there once stood a castle of the same name. Its last owner was Lars Brokhuus ; but before the castle fell into his hands it belonged to a knight named Børre, who dwelt there with his daughter Mette. The knight being far from wealthy, was desirous of seeing his child provided for before his death, and therefore determined upon making a " Brudeskue " (bride-show).

This, in former times, was a fête at which all the nobles, knights, and esquires assembled, titled with each other, rode at the ring, and, lastly, paid their court to the fair daughter of the house with costly presents. In consequence of Mette's great beauty and amiable character, many were the knights assembled at the fête. For several days previous to the festivities every room at Egeskov was occupied by the guests, while fresh ones still continued to arrive, so that Børre at length knew not where to find room for all the strangers.

The last day, just before the running at the ring commenced, a young knight with a numerous retinue arrived at Egeskov. He was splendidly armed, and bore himself so proudly and arrogantly, that he looked with scorn on all those who were riding to the castle at the same time. Among these was an esquire, named Ebbe, from a manor which lay a little westward of the creek of Veile-fiord, which on the other side of Rosenvold runs in between Veilby and the parish of Gaarslev. The poverty of this esquire was become proverbial among the people of that time ; they had made a lampoon on him, in which it was said :

" Ebbe from Nebbe, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor fire-wood."

He was mounted on a horse, which in its younger days had been a noble animal, but was now old and worn-out. His armour was riven and mended in many places, as were also his kirtle and mantle. When Ebbe and Sir Olaf (such was the name of the haughty knight)

met, the latter immediately began to jeer and taunt the other ; and when they both arrived at the castle-gate, Ebbe fell back while Olaf with all his retinue pressed forward, in order to enter first. Ebbe, however, took but little heed of Sir Olaf's jeers : " Ride on," cried he to the knight, " when the lord enters his castle the lowest servants are always accustomed to go first to prepare the way."

They rode immediately up to the racecourse, where the eyes of all the dames and damsels were directed to Olaf, on account of his handsome figure and costly equipment. Ebbe, on the contrary, excited no notice, and remained a little behind the others ; as if he were too bashful to come forward and expose his poverty. But when it came to the running at the ring he was the foremost of all, and Sir Olaf, let him strive and manage his horse as he might, was unable to carry off more than one ring on his spear, while Ebbe bore away three. When all the assembled knights had ridden at the ring, they began to try their skill at tilting.

At this game Ebbe was for a long time the most successful candidate, and challenged Olaf, who had already unhorsed many knights ; but he at length began to tire, and his worn-out horse tottered under him. Olaf, on the contrary, rode a noble steed, and had, moreover, changed his horse after riding at the ring. Ebbe, nevertheless, ventured to encounter him, and fought bravely as long as he was able ; but in a short time Olaf overpowered him. Ebbe fell, and left the tilting-ground, and as there were no other competitors, Olaf was declared victor, and received the prize from the hand of Mette.

In the evening all the guests assembled in the knights' hall, where the different suitors entered, according to their rank and condition, bringing with them presents to Mette. The greater number brought costly gifts ; but herein also, Olaf surpassed all the others. Besides the costly present which he brought for Mette, he gave to the knight Børre two small castles of embossed gold, saying : " These two castles, of which you here see a representation, belong to me, and I will share them with your daughter, if you will bestow her on me."

Last of all came Ebbe. The knights smiled on seeing him, poor and meanly clad, without a gift, appear before Børre. Ebbe was not unconscious of their contempt, but without deigning to notice them, he bent his knee before Mette, and said in a loud and audible voice : " I approach you last, as is befitting a poor man, who is so far beneath the other suitors in condition and wealth. I here lay at your feet the most precious thing I own " ; with these words he placed his sword on the ground before Mette.

" That's no great thing to give away," observed Olaf contemptuously, " seeing you have been so recently overpowered, while you bore this sword in your hand."

.

"God grant, Sir Olaf," answered Ebbe, "that Mette may receive my poor gift as surely as thou shouldst have suffered a mischance under this sword, had our conditions been more equally matched."

Several of the guests here interfered between the speakers, in order to make peace, and the two rivals separated. It was now agreed among those assembled that Mette should be allowed a month for consideration before she fixed her choice.

The following day there was a great hunt at Egeskov. From early dawn the huntsman's horn resounded through the forest, and here, as at the tilting, every one was eager to show his skill. The ladies, according to the fashion of the times, partook in the amusement of the chase, and followed the deer with all the ardour of the bolder sex. Most of them gathered round Mette, but foremost rode Sir Olaf, and to judge from the friendly looks with which the lady regarded him, it seemed as if he would be the object of her choice. Ebbe was last of all. His horse had not yet recovered from the fatigues of the preceding day. He would not, therefore, force it on, as he cared but little at being left far behind the others. Thus passed the greater part of the forenoon, and the hunt took its course farther and farther down towards Trelde, when Ebbe, just as he was turning his horse into a cross path, saw Mette returning and coming towards him. After riding together a short way, Mette said :

"I am tired of the pursuit after hares and deer, and will accompany you among these green trees. Why are you so far behind the others ? Are you not fond of hunting ?"

"Yes, undoubtedly I am," replied Ebbe, "but my poor horse is old and tired, and I must spare him."

"I think," said Mette, "it would be better to part with him, than always to be the last in jousts and other manly games."

"That I would not do willingly," answered Ebbe ; "this horse is all my father had to leave me ; many years it carried him, and has done good service in its better days ; in reward for which, I will cherish him out of my slender means, now that he is old."

"Do you know what I am thinking of, Ebbe ?" said Mette. "I will make an exchange with you. Give me your horse, and you shall have mine instead ; it is young and strong, and then you need no longer remain in the background, when there is a striving who shall be foremost."

"That bargain," replied Ebbe, "you would hardly stand to, and my horse must be where I am ; he is my greatest treasure."

"Then," said Mette, "your words yesterday were but empty sounds, when you told me you gave me the most valuable thing you owned."

Before Ebbe had time to answer, Mette urged on her horse, and

rode from him into the wood. The following day all the knights took their departure from Egeskov, and were invited to return when a month had elapsed, in order that they might know whose gift Mette preferred, and, consequently, whom she chose for her husband. Mette stood on the balcony, and courteously greeted them as they passed ; but when Ebbe, the last of all, rode through the gate, she turned her head away and would not greet him. Dejected at the unlucky result of his visit, he took the road back to Nebbegaard. When he reached that part of the wood where the shepherd from Egeskov was sitting tending his flock, he called to him and said :

"Go and greet the lady Mette from Ebbe, and tell her that when she offered to exchange horses with him yesterday, he refused, because he would not barter his steed, but that she may know he spoke only the truth, when he said he offered her the dearest thing of all that he possessed, relate what thou hast seen him do."

Ebbe caressed his horse, and when the animal bent down his head on his master's shoulder and neighed with joy, he exclaimed : "I offer thee to Mette's beauty."

At the same moment he drew his sword and killed the horse. Thus closed the "Brudeskue" at Egeskov.

Almost all the knights that had been present felt convinced that Olaf would be the fortunate suitor with Mette and her father, on account of his youth, beauty, and manly accomplishments, and also because he was related to a man of whom Borre would not willingly make an enemy.

On the point of Trelde, surrounded and concealed by a thick forest, there was at that time a castle belonging to a rich and powerful Ness king (or sea-king), named Trolle. His reputation was so great and widespread, that there was not a tract of land in the whole country where he was not known, at least by name. From the beginning of spring until late in the winter he sailed along the coasts of Jutland, Fyen, and Seeland, with his well-manned vessels (Snekker), in order to plunder all the merchantmen he found ; and not unfrequently landed on the coasts, wherever he saw there was an opportunity of carrying off any booty.

Trolle was a man of such extraordinary strength and courage, that he had no need to rely on the number of his companions. He had frequently engaged single-handed against four, and always come off victorious. Although the Danish kings, even at that early period, sought to check these lawless men, who disturbed the peaceable inhabitants of the kingdom, and destroyed all confidence in commerce ; yet there was no one bold enough to encounter Trolle. He laughed at the King's laws, and cared but little for being proclaimed an outlaw. On the ocean he was master wherever his vessels appeared, and his castle at the Ness of Trelde was so well

fortified and guarded that he never needed to fear a surprise.

The knight Börre, who was Trolle's nearest neighbour, was not well pleased with the proximity, especially as it often happened that he was aggrieved by the many wanton annoyances he was compelled to submit to during the winter months, at which time the Ness King remained at his castle of Trelde. After enduring many vexations, he resolved on forming a plan to rid himself of his adversary, and just before Christmas sent a secret message to all his neighbours. They came, and it was settled among them that each should quietly assemble as many of his followers as possible, and attack Trolle on the following New Year's eve. When this was arranged, as well as the best method they could adopt for making the attack, they separated, and each returned home.

But the evening after, when all the confederates were assembled at a Yule festivity in the neighbourhood, the Ness King and his men suddenly burst into the apartment, extinguished the lights, made prisoners of five of the knights, and bore them off to Trelde, where they were kept in durance, until they had paid a very large ransom. No one could imagine how Trolle became acquainted with their plan; but certain it is, that from that time none of his neighbours thought any more of attacking him, considering it more prudent to bear patiently with the annoyances to which he subjected them.

Ebbe's father had been one of the confederates, and his poverty was partly in consequence of the heavy ransom he had been obliged to pay for the recovery of his liberty. One day, just before the festivities took place at Egeskov, Börre went out to hunt, and returned towards evening loaded with game. On coming to the boundary between Egeskov and Trelde, he met Trolle, who also had been out hunting on that day.

"Thanks for the past, Sir Börre," said Trolle with a scornful laugh. "You ride about here killing game in our woods, so that at last I must put a stop to it."

"I have not been hunting on your domain, Trolle," answered Börre; "and the right of hunting here belongs to me."

"It matters little to whom the right of hunting belongs," answered Trolle; "for when you have destroyed all the game in your own woods, the deer will go from mine over to yours; but I think I shall be able to find a remedy for that, when I am so inclined. 'Those who stretch out farthest can embrace the most,' says an old proverb; but this time I will not be so particular, as I hear that Olaf looks with a favourable eye on your daughter."

With these words the Ness King rode back to Trelde. Olaf was the son of the Ness King.

To resume our story. After slaying his horse, Ebbe returned home to Nebbegaard.

A week after this event, his servant came early one morning to tell him that a beautiful horse, ready saddled, stood fastened at the castle-gate, and no one knew to whom it belonged. Greatly surprised, Ebbe went out to look at the horse, which stood proudly and impatiently stamping on the ground. The rein was of crimson silk, on which was embroidered the old proverb :

“ A straightforward difference is easiest settled.”

No sooner had Ebbe read these words than he understood their meaning, and felt pleased and happy in the thought that the horse came from Mette, and in the hope that her present raised in him. He led the horse into the castle, and passed the remainder of the time that Mette had required in riding and exercising it.

At the expiration of the month, the knights again assembled at Egeskov to learn their fate. They were received with equal kindness by Börre and his daughter ; and after their repast, the old knight conducted them into the great hall, where all the presents which they had brought on their former visits were displayed on a table. Mette walked at her father's side into the apartment. To the surprise of all, she took up the sword of the poor esquire, kissed the hilt, and said :

“ As Ebbe has given me all that he owned, I will return gift for gift, and call him my husband.”

No one present expected this. Ebbe fell on his knee before Mette, kissed her hand, and said : “ May heaven bless you, Mette, and grant that you may never repent those words, or of the happiness you bestow on so poor a man.”

Olaf could hardly control his anger at finding himself supplanted and eclipsed by an obscure esquire. Börre then came forward, and said to Mette : “ My daughter, as thou hast chosen him thou thinkest best of, I will now say a word which shall be carried into effect. The last time we were all assembled here, Ebbe had but little luck either in the tournament or the chase ; to-morrow, therefore, at break of day, we will meet in the forest, and afford him an opportunity of proving his manhood.”

“ Tis well,” said Ebbe, “ be it as you say ; and when the chase is over, I will challenge each of Mette's knightly suitors to single combat with sharp or blunt lances, or with any weapon they may choose.”

“ That challenge I accept,” answered Olaf angrily. “ To-morrow we shall hunt, but the day after you shall do battle with me for life or death ; and I will advise the lady Mette, while we are away, to pray that heaven may grant her betrothed better luck than he had the last time our swords met.”

"Good luck will come when I stand in need of it," answered Ebbe, "and Mette can spare her prayers until she knows which of us two most requires them."

The next morning at sunrise, all the knights rode out into the forest, to strive which could bring home the largest quantity of game. This time Mette and the other ladies at the castle did not join in the hunt. Towards evening they came back one after another, and showed Börre the result of their day's sport. They had all assembled, with the exception of Olaf and Ebbe. Mette began to be very uneasy; she wished most anxiously that Ebbe might bring the greatest share, and could not imagine what detained him so long. At length she began to fear that he and Olaf had met each other in the forest, and had fought together; but her father calmed her by saying, that before they left in the morning for the chase, each had pledged his word that they would not engage in combat at the hunt.

At length, just as it was growing late, Olaf returned, and that day, as on the former occasion, his success had been greater than that of the others, and every one was now anxious to see what Ebbe would bring home with him. But hour passed after hour, and there were no tidings of him, and Borre gave the signal for the guests to go to table. At the same moment the watchman's horn was heard, and Ebbe came riding into the castle-yard, and greeted the company.

"Well, Sir Ebbe," cried Olaf, in a sarcastic tone, "where is your booty? It appears you have been as fortunate this time as you were at the last hunt."

"Much game I certainly do not bring," answered Ebbe, coolly, "and what I have was hardly worth the trouble of bringing home; but at the chase, things go by chance, and one must take what one can get."

"Well! but, let us see what you bring," cried Börre, impatiently.

"Here it is," said Ebbe, throwing aside his cloak, and casting a human head across the table to Olaf. "Do you know that head? The crows in the forest are feeding on the carcase."

A cry of surprise was uttered by all the knights present, for in the distorted features each recognised the formidable sea-robber, the Ness King Trolle, Olaf's father. Before the knights had recovered from their astonishment, Ebbe continued: "I have slain that lawless man, Sir Borre, in order to rid you of a troublesome neighbour, and in retribution for the wrong he did to my father. Tomorrow I will defend my deed against the knight Olaf, in whatever way he chooses."

But no combat took place between Ebbe and Olaf; for with the father's death, the son's courage departed, and he thought it not

advisable to meet an adversary who had prevailed over the far-dreaded Ness King.

Olaf immediately departed from Egeskov and returned to Trelde. The following day he, together with all Trolle's men, left their castle, and from that time were never seen or heard of more. Some said that Olaf had gone more northward, and settled in Sallingland with his followers, while others thought he had quitted Denmark altogether.

Ebbe's valour gained him great consideration in Borre's family ; he and Mette lived happily together for many years.

DANISH

GLOB AND ALGER

BEFORE Jutland was united under one sovereign there were many petty kings there, each of whom had his portion of land to rule over, who were almost always engaged in quarrels and warfare with one another. One of these kings was named Alger; he ruled over Sallingland. His neighbour was Glob of Fuur, an isle also in the Limfjord, about a mile from Salling. Glob had come from Thy with a great army, and warred with the King of Fuurland, until he at length slew him, drove away his son, and made himself King over the people of Fuur. Alger was thus King in Salling, and Glob in Fuur.

The fugitive prince fled from place to place, without having any fixed abode; for Glob had declared him an outlaw, and set a price upon his head. At the time these events took place, he lived in a small dwelling in the neighbourhood of Alger's castle at Salling. When Glob had gained a firm footing in Fuurland he resolved on extending his power, and trying whether he could not also become King over Salling. For this purpose he assembled a large army and crossed the fjord; but his attempt ended by his being driven back with great loss, and it subsequently appeared that he had given up all hostile designs against Alger.

In the meantime Alger, placing but little reliance on Glob's pacific policy, entered into a secret alliance with some of his neighbours, by which they bound themselves to come to his aid with all the force they could bring, as soon as Alger should light the beacons outside his castle, as a sign that the enemy was in the neighbourhood.

When Glob made his attack on Salling, it happened that one of his courtiers, named Birke, saw Alger's daughter Helvig, and became enamoured of her. When the two kings had settled their quarrel, Birke crossed over to Salling and visited Alger. Glob saw this with pleasure, because, when he asked permission of the King to go, he promised to avail himself of the opportunity to spy out all he could. Alger, on his part, was also glad to see Birke, knowing how high he stood in Glob's favour, and that no one could give better information of the King's intentions and feelings than he.

But it was impossible for Birke to preserve the favour of both

princes. When he had been for some time at Alger's, and had nearly obtained the promise of Helvig's hand, his love triumphed, and made him a traitor to Glob, so that he revealed to Alger all the King's plans, informing him that he only waited for an opportunity to make an attack on Salling. This soon reached the ear of Glob, who was bitterly enraged at the conduct of his emissary.

He immediately sent a messenger over to Alger, demanding that he should give up the traitor Birke, also the fugitive Prince Eiler, who had found shelter in his land. Alger refused to comply with either of these demands, and laughed at the threats uttered by the King's messenger.

With regard to Alger's daughter Helvig, her beauty had already called forth a host of suitors who, to gain her favour, vied with each other in knightly games and song, long before Glob came to Fuurland. But Helvig was indifferent to them all; she had secretly engaged herself to the fugitive Eiler, who lived in the neighbourhood of Alger's castle, and was their daily guest. At first she only viewed with pity the unfortunate prince; but this feeling soon turned to fervent love, and Helvig called Heaven to witness that she would rather sink into the grave than choose any other for her husband.

Alger was attached to Eiler, but his interest bade him favour Birke; he therefore commanded Helvig to give her promise to Birke and forget Eiler. But the maiden was not to be persuaded.

Two years had nearly passed, and Glob had taken no hostile steps against Alger. The latter had sent many spies over to Fuur, in order to find out whether Glob had any warlike intentions against him; but the King seemed occupied only in chivalrous games and the chase. He even once sent a messenger over to Sallingland to invite Alger to visit him. Birke advised the King not to go, adding that he knew Glob too well not to feel certain that it was only a stratagem to get him into his power. Alger followed his counsel and remained at home.

It was in the winter, just before Yule, that this invitation was sent from Fuurland to the King. A few days after, Alger had a great banquet, and drank Yule-ale with his guests. Birke in the meanwhile was growing impatient at the long procrastination of his wishes, and obtained Alger's promise that he should have his daughter's consent before the New Year's festivities were over.

In the evening, when all the guests were assembled at the castle, and just as the mirth was at its height, the watchman's horn sounded from the tower. At the same moment a retainer rushed into the hall, announcing that he had seen a number of boats from Fuurland coming in the direction of Salling. Immediately after, another messenger arrived, who related that King Glob had landed with his men, and was burning and destroying everything as he advanced.

The guests were paralysed at these unlooked-for tidings. Alger alone retained his self-possession.

"I thought rightly enough," said he, "that Glob would invite himself to our festivity, since I refused to go over to him. It concerns all when the wolf is at the door. Our business is now to receive him in a fitting manner, and that that may take place, I beseech you, my friends, to lend me your aid."

The guests were silent and looked at each other: they had assembled at the castle to drink Yule-ale but not to fight, and Alger plainly saw that their silence signified no less than a refusal. His embarrassment was the greater, as, in consequence of the mildness of the winter, many of his men were gone to sea, to plunder along the coast of Norway.

Before Alger's guests had come to any determination, Helvig entered the hall, and thus addressed them:

"Be it known to all here assembled, that I am the betrothed of Eiler, the son of the late King of Fuurland, and that I would rather endure the greatest sufferings than break my word, were not my father's life and fortune now threatened: but as I see among his guests men who have been suitors for my hand, I say to them, that to him who is able to free us from this danger, I will give myself and be his dutiful wife, so may God help me, as I will keep my promise."

These words had a powerful effect on all. The young were inflamed to daring deeds in the hope of possessing the lovely Helvig, the older were moved by her devotion to her father; and thus they left the castle, firmly resolved to exert all their power to save Alger, and drive Glob from Salling.

The same night, some hours after the guests had departed, while Glob was making preparations to invest the castle on the following day, Helvig left her chamber, and, accompanied by an attendant, glided silently through a secret passage that led into a copse, at the opposite side of which Eiler abode. He was greatly surprised at seeing them enter his dwelling.

"Rise, Eiler," said Helvig, "it is not fitting that thou shouldst sleep when Alger's enemies are awake."

She now related to the Prince the promise that, urged by necessity, she had been obliged to make to her father's guests, and prayed of him to devise some means of anticipating the others. "Take thy sword," added she, "for to-night thy part will be to save thyself, my father, and our youthful love."

She then took leave of him, and the two females returned home.

But Eiler remained motionless and mute long after Helvig's departure. He felt how much depended on immediate action, he wished so heartily to save Alger; but he seemed destitute of all the means necessary for that object. After reflecting some time, he

rose, threw a dark cloak over his weapons, and stole into the thicket, towards the spot, where Glob had pitched his camp.

There all was life and activity ; for the King had resolved upon attempting a storm as soon as daylight appeared, fearing, if he delayed longer, he should be attacked by Alger's friends.

Eiler crept as near as he could to the camp, so that he heard the enemy's men conversing together ; but he was concealed from their sight by the rushes on the bank of a deep ditch, which conveyed the water from the Limfiord into the fosses surrounding Alger's castle. Towards morning, Glob had completed his preparations. He had caused a small hut to be raised for himself of turf and hides, in which he hoped to take some rest before the dawn gave the signal for the attack.

All was quiet in the camp.

When the men had lain down to sleep where they best could, Eiler approached softly, and crept along the edge of the ditch, concealed among the rushes, until he had passed the watch. He then walked fearlessly forward. The camp-fires were nearly burnt out, and the darkness veiled his features, so that those of the enemy who were not yet asleep took him for one of their comrades, and let him pass where he pleased.

When he came to the spot where Glob slept, he gently raised the hide which hung before the entrance, and crept into the hut.

The King lay on a bench, wrapped in his scarlet cloak. A torch was burning on a sod, which threw a red glare over the sleeper's countenance. Eiler drew a dagger from his belt, held his breath, and glided noiselessly as a snake towards the bench.

He thought of his father, whom Glob had dethroned and slain ; he thought of the injury he had himself suffered, how his youth had been passed amid dangers and want, during the many years Glob had hunted him as an outlaw from place to place ; he thought also that Glob's death would free Alger from a dangerous foe, and gain for him Helvig, the dear object of all his thoughts ; but yet he hesitated to plunge the dagger in Glob's breast.

The King lay still and motionless in a deep sleep, his hands folded, as if he had fallen asleep while repeating his evening prayer. The longer Eiler looked on him, the more incapable he became of killing the unarmed. He fixed the dagger into the couch close to the King's head ; then left the hut, and stole softly out of the camp, as unobserved and silently as he had entered it.

When he had reached the copse, he continued along the secret path that led up to Alger's castle. He went to the King, informed him of what he had overheard in the enemy's camp, and what he had done. Alger praised Eiler's daring, and, although he might have been freed from a dangerous enemy, who threatened him with

destruction, he could not withhold his admiration of the youth's exploit, and would rather live and die with honour than owe his deliverance to treachery and crime. Eiler remained in the castle, resolved to meet his death with the rest of the warriors.

As the morning sun rose over the wood, the horns were sounded in Glob's camp, and the King moved forwards towards the castle with all his men, and the strife began. All went as Alger had predicted ; his force was too weak and small to prevent his enemy from ascending the ramparts, and when the bells over in Fuur sounded for matins, Glob was master of the castle. Alger ordered his men to lay down their arms, and no longer fight against such overwhelming numbers. He then descended into the courtyard, took the royal crown from his head, and laid it at the feet of Glob.

"God's peace, and a kindly greeting to you, my brother," cried Fuurland's King to him, at the same time smilingly lifting off his helmet and wiping his forehead. "You see how anxious I am to enjoy your company by coming to invite you myself ; although you refused to be my guest. But why take off your crown ; I think such a greeting too lowly."

"I give you my crown," answered Alger, "that you may take it as you have taken my castle and my kingdom."

"Take back your crown, brother," replied Glob, "it is shaped to your head, and is much better there than at my feet. And know that I am come to-day with the intention of giving, not of taking."

In saying these words he drew from his belt the dagger which Eiler the previous night had stuck in his couch.

"Look here," said he, "I bring you a knife which one of your people, whoever he may be, left behind him in my tent last night ; and we have been obliged to creep over the wall to get in, as you had barred your gates against us. Let me now have a few words with the man who owns this knife."

"The knife is mine," said Eiler, advancing towards the King. "God delivered thy life into my hands, and I spared it, although I have suffered wrongs and bitter misery from thee."

"And was my life really in thy hand, Eiler ?" answered Glob. "Then, as thou hast spared me, I will reward thee in the best way I can ; and if I have not enough to give, Alger shall help me. What thinkest thou, my brother ? If thou wilt give Eiler thy daughter, I will give them their outfit. I think that my kingdom of Fuurland will suffice for them. I am an old and childless man, and if Eiler will take reparation for blood, he and Helvig shall be my children."

Alger could hardly believe what he heard, so great was his surprise. He shed tears for joy, as he threw his arms round Glob and

pressed him to his breast ; and as the horn in the morning sounded for battle, so did the music in the evening resound to the dance ; for that same night the marriage of Helvig and Eiler was celebrated.

All Helvig's suitors, who had promised to help Alger against his enemy, arrived at the castle just in time to be present at the wedding.

“ ARABIAN NIGHTS ”

1400-1500 A.D.

THE FISHERMAN AND THE GENIE

THERE was formerly an aged fisherman, so poor that he could barely obtain food for himself, his wife, and his three children. He went out early every morning to his employment ; and he had imposed a rule upon himself never to cast his nets above four times a day.

On one occasion he set out before the morn had disappeared. When he reached the seashore, he undressed himself, and cast his nets. In drawing them to land three times in succession, he felt sure from their resistance and weight that he had secured an excellent draught of fish. Instead of which, he only found on the first haul the carcase of an ass ; on the second, a large pannier filled with sand and mud ; and on the third, a large quantity of heavy stones, shells, and filth. It is impossible to describe his disappointment and despair. The day now began to break, and having, like a good Mussulman, finished his prayer, he threw his nets for the fourth time. Again he supposed he had caught a great quantity of fish, as he drew them with as much difficulty as before. He nevertheless found none ; but discovered a heavy vase of yellow copper, shut up and fastened with lead, on which there was the impression of a seal. “ I will sell this to a founder,” said he with joy, “ and with the money I shall get for it I will purchase a measure of corn.”

He examined the vase on all sides ; he shook it, but could hear nothing ; and this, together with the impression of the seal on the lead, made him think it was filled with something valuable. In order to find this out, he took his knife and got it open. He directly turned the top downward, and was much surprised to find nothing come out ; he then set it down before him, and while he was attentively observing it there issued from it so thick a smoke that he was obliged to step back a few paces. This smoke, by degrees rose almost to the clouds, and spread itself over both the water and the shore, appearing like a thick fog. The fisherman, as may easily be imagined, was a good deal surprised at this sight. When the smoke

had all come out from the vase, it again collected itself, and became a solid body, and then took the shape of a genie of a gigantic size. The genie, looking at the fisherman, exclaimed, "Humble thyself before me, or I will kill thee."

"And for what reason, pray, will you kill me?" answered the fisherman; "have you already forgotten that I have set you at liberty?"

"I remember it very well," returned he; "but that shall not prevent my destroying thee, and I will only grant thee one favour."

"And pray what is that?" said the fisherman.

"It is," replied the genie, "to permit thee to choose the manner of thy death. I can treat thee no otherwise," said the genie; "and to convince thee of it, hear my history:

"I am one of those spirits who rebelled against the sovereignty of God. Solomon, the son of David, the prophet of God, commanded me to acknowledge his authority, and submit to his laws. I haughtily refused. In order, therefore, to punish me, he enclosed me in this copper vase; and, to prevent me forcing my way out, he put upon the leaden cover the impression of his seal, on which the great name of God is engraven. This done, he gave the vase to one of those genies who obeyed him, and ordered him to cast me into the sea.

"During the first century of my captivity, I swore that if anyone delivered me before the first hundred years were passed, I would make him rich. During the second century, I swore that if any released me, I would discover to him all the treasures of the earth. During the third, I promised to make my deliverer a most powerful monarch, and to grant him every day any three requests he chose. These centuries passed away without any deliverance. Enraged, at last, to be so long a prisoner, I swore that I would, without mercy, kill whoever should in future release me, and that the only favour I would grant him should be, to choose what manner of death he pleased. Since, therefore, thou hast come here to-day, and hast delivered me, fix upon whatever kind of death thou wilt."

The fisherman was in great distress at finding him thus resolved on his death, not so much on his own account as for his three children, whose means of subsistence would be greatly reduced by his death. "Alas!" he cried, "have pity on me, remember what I have done for thee."

"Let us lose no time," cried the genie; "your arguments avail not. Make haste, tell me how you wish to die."

Necessity is the mother of invention; and the fisherman thought of a stratagem. "Since, then," said he, "I cannot escape death, I submit to the will of God; but before I choose the sort of death, I conjure you, by the great name of God, which is graven upon the

seal of the prophet Solomon, the son of David, answer me truly to a question I am going to put to you." The genie trembled at this adjuration, and said to the fisherman, "Ask what thou wilt, and make haste."

"Dare you, then, to swear by the great name of God that you really were in that vase? This vase cannot contain one of your feet; how, then, can it hold your whole body?"

"I swear to thee, notwithstanding," replied he, "that I was there just as thou seest me. Wilt thou not believe me after the solemn oath I have taken?"

"No, truly," added the fisherman, "I shall not believe you unless I were to see it."

Immediately the form of the genie began to change into smoke, and extended itself, as before, over both the shore and the sea; and then, collecting itself, began to enter the vase, and continued to do so, in a slow and equal manner, till nothing remained without. The fisherman immediately took the leaden cover, and put it on the vase.

"Genie," he cried, "it is now your turn to ask pardon. I shall throw you again into the sea, and I will build, opposite the very spot where you are cast, a house upon the shore, in which I will live, to warn all fishermen that shall come and throw their nets, not to fish up so evil a genie as thou art, who makest an oath to kill the man who shall set thee at liberty."

The genie tried every argument to move the fisherman's pity, but in vain. "You are too treacherous for me to trust you," returned the fisherman; "I should deserve to lose my life if I put myself in your power a second time."

“ARABIAN NIGHTS”

THE STORY OF THE ONE-EYED CALENDER¹

To show by what strange accident I became blind of the right eye, I must give you the account of my life. I was yet a youth, when the Sultan, my father (for you must know I am a prince by birth), perceived that I was endowed with good natural ability, and spared nothing proper for improving it. No sooner was I able to read and write, but I learned the Koran from beginning to end by heart, all the traditions collected from the mouth of our prophet, and the works of poets. I applied myself to geography, chronology, and to speak the Arabian language in its purity; not forgetting in the meantime all such exercises as were proper for a prince to understand. But one thing which I was fond of, and succeeded in, was penmanship: wherein I surpassed all the celebrated scribes of our kingdom.

The fame of my learning reached the Emperor of Hindostan, who sent an embassy with rich presents to my father and invited me to his court. I returned with the ambassador.

We had been about a month on our journey, when we saw in the distance an immense cloud of dust, and soon after we discovered fifty fierce horsemen, sons of the desert, well armed.

Not being able to repel force by force, we told them we were the ambassadors of the Sultan of India; but the sons of the desert insolently answered, “Why do you wish us to respect the Sultan, your master? We are not his subjects, nor even within his realm.”

They attacked us on all sides. I defended myself as long as I could, but finding that I was wounded, and that the ambassador and all our attendants were overthrown, I took advantage of the remaining strength of my horse, and escaped. My horse was wounded and suddenly fell dead under me. Alone, wounded, and a stranger, I bound up my own wound and walked on the rest of the day, and arrived at the foot of a mountain, where I perceived, as the sun set, a cave; I went in, and stayed there that night, after I had eaten

¹ A Calender was a privileged beggar or mendicant pilgrim among the Mohammedans.

some fruits that I gathered by the way. I continued my journey for several successive days without finding any place of abode ; but after a month's time I came to a large town, well inhabited—it was surrounded by several streams, so that it seemed to enjoy perpetual spring.

My face, hands, and feet were black and sunburnt ; and by my long journey, my boots were quite worn out, so that I was forced to walk barefooted ; and my clothes were all in rags. I entered the town to inform myself where I was, and addressed myself to a tailor that was at work in his shop ; who made me sit down by him, and asked me who I was, from whence I came, and what had brought me thither. I did not conceal anything that had befallen me, nor made I any scruple to reveal to him my rank. The tailor listened to me with attention ; and brought me something to eat, and offered me an apartment at his house, which I accepted.

Some days after my arrival, the tailor asked me if I knew anything by which I could acquire a livelihood. I told him that I was well versed in the science of laws, both human and divine ; that I was a grammarian, a poet, and, above all, that I wrote remarkably well. "None of these things will avail you here. If you will follow my advice," he added, "you will procure a short jacket, and as you are strong and in good health, you may go into the neighbouring forest, and cut wood for fuel. You may then go and expose it for sale in the market. By these means, you will be enabled to wait till the cloud which hangs over you, and obliges you to conceal your birth, shall have blown over. I will furnish you with a cord and hatchet."

The next day the tailor brought me a rope, a hatchet, and a short jacket, and recommended me to some poor people who gained their bread after the same manner, that they might take me into their company. They conducted me to the wood, and the first day I brought in as much upon my head as procured me half a piece of gold of the money of that country ; for though the wood was not far distant from the town, yet it was very scarce, by reason that few would be at the trouble of fetching it for themselves. I gained a good sum of money in a short time, and repaid my tailor what he had lent me.

I continued this way of living for a whole year. One day, having by chance penetrated farther into the wood than usual, I happened to light on a pleasant spot, where I began to cut ; and in pulling up the root of a tree I espied an iron ring, fastened to a trap-door of the same metal. I took away the earth that covered it, and having lifted it up, discovered a flight of stairs, which I descended with my axe in my hand.

When I reached the bottom, I found myself in a palace, which was

as well lighted as if it had been above ground in the open air. I went forward along a gallery supported by pillars of jasper, the base and capitals being of massy gold : when I saw a lady of a noble and graceful air, and extremely beautiful, coming toward me. I hastened to meet her ; and as I was making a low obeisance, she asked me, " Are you a man, or a genie ? "

" A man, madam," said I.

" By what adventure," said she (fetching a deep sigh), " are you come hither ? I have lived here twenty-five years, and you are the first man I have beheld in that time."

Her great beauty, and the sweetness and civility wherewith she received me, emboldened me to say, " Madam, before I satisfy your curiosity, give me leave to say that I am infinitely gratified with this unexpected meeting, which offers me an occasion of consolation in the midst of my affliction ; and perhaps it may give me an opportunity of making you also more happy than you are."

I then related my story to her from beginning to end.

" Alas ! Prince," she replied, sighing, " the most enchanting spots cannot afford delight when we are there against our wills. But hear now my history. I am a princess, the daughter of a sultan, the King of the Ebony Island, to which the precious wood found in it has given its name.

" The King, my father, had chosen for my husband a prince, who was my cousin ; but on the very night of the bridal festivities, in the midst of the rejoicings of the court, a genie took me away. I fainted with alarm, and when I recovered I found myself in this place. I was long inconsolable ; but time and necessity have reconciled me to see the genie. Twenty-five years I have passed in this place, in which I have everything necessary for life and splendour.

" Every ten days," continued the Princess, " the genie visits me. In the meantime, if I have any occasion for him, I have only to touch a talisman, and he appears. It is now four days since he was here, and I have therefore to wait six days more before he again makes his appearance. You, therefore, may remain five with me, if it be agreeable to you, in order to keep me company ; and I will endeavour to regale and entertain you equal to your merit and dignity."

The Princess then conducted me to a bath, the most commodious and the most sumptuous imaginable ; and when I came forth, instead of my own clothes I found another costly robe, which I did not esteem so much for its richness, as because it made me appear worthy to be in her company. We sat down on a sofa covered with rich tapestry, with cushions of the rarest Indian brocade ; and some time after she covered a table with several dishes of delicate meats. We ate, and passed the remaining part of the day, as also the even-

ing, together very pleasantly.

The next day I said to her, "Fair Princess, you have been too long buried alive in this subterranean palace; pray rise—follow me and enjoy the light of day, of which you have been deprived so many years."

"Prince," replied she, with a smile, "if you out of ten days will grant me nine, and resign the tenth to the genie, the light of day would be nothing to me."

"Princess," said I, "the fear of the genie makes you speak thus; for my part I regard him so little, that I will break in pieces his talisman, with the spell that is written about it. Let him come; and how brave or powerful he be, I will defy him."

On saying this I gave the talisman a kick with my foot, and broke it in pieces.

The talisman was no sooner broken than the whole palace shook as if ready to fall to atoms, and the walls opened to afford a passage to the genie. I had no sooner felt the shock than, at the earnest request of the Princess, I took to flight. Having hastily put on my own robe, I ascended the stairs leading to the forest, and reached the town in safety. My landlord, the tailor, was very glad to see me. I had, however, in my haste, left my hatchet and cord in the Princess's chamber. Shortly after my return, while brooding over this loss, and lamenting the cruel treatment to which the Princess would be exposed, the tailor came in and said, "An old man, whom I do not know, brings your hatchet and cord, and wishes to speak to you, for he will deliver them to none but yourself."

At these words I changed colour, and fell a-trembling. While the tailor was asking me the reason, my chamber door opened, and the old man, having no patience to stay, appeared with my hatchet and cord. "I am a genie," said he, speaking to me, "a grandson of Eblis, prince of genies. Is not this your hatchet and is not this your cord?"

After the genie had put these questions to me he gave me no time to answer. He grasped me by the middle, dragged me out of the chamber, and mounting into the air carried me up to the skies with extraordinary swiftness. He descended again in like manner to the earth, which on a sudden he caused to open with a stroke of his foot, when I found myself in the enchanted palace, before the fair Princess of the Isle of Ebony. But, alas! what a spectacle was there! I saw what pierced me to the heart; this poor Princess was weltering in her blood, and lay upon the ground, more like one dead than alive, with her cheeks bathed in tears.

* The genie having loaded us both with many insults and reproaches, drew his scimitar and declared that he would give life and liberty to either of us who would with his scimitar cut off the head

of the other. We both resolutely declined to purchase freedom at such a price, and asserted our choice to be to die rather in the presence of each other.

"I see," said the genie, "that you both outbrave me, but both of you shall know by my treatment of you of what I am capable."

At these words the monster took up the scimitar and cut off one of her hands, which left her only so much life as to give me a token with the other that she bade me for ever adieu; and then she died. I fainted at the sight. When I was come to myself again, I cried, "Strike, for I am ready to die, and await death as the greatest favour you can show me."

But instead of killing me, he said, "Behold how genies revenge themselves on those who offend them. Thou art the least to blame and I will content myself with transforming thee into a dog, ape, lion, or bird; take thy choice of any of these, I will leave it to thyself."

These words gave me some hope of being able to appease him.

"O genie," said I, "restrain your rage, and since you will not take away my life, pardon me freely, as a good dervish pardoned one who envied him."

"And how was that?" said he.

Whereupon I told the story to the genie, employing all my eloquence to persuade him to imitate so good an example, and to grant me pardon; but it was impossible to move his compassion.

"All that I can do for thee," said he, "is to grant thee thy life, but I must place thee under enchantments." So saying, he seized me violently, and carried me through the arched roof of the subterraneous palace, which opened to give him passage. He ascended with me into the air to such a height that the earth appeared like a little white cloud. He then descended again like lightning, and alighted upon the summit of a mountain.

Here he took up a handful of earth, and, muttering some words which I did not understand, threw it upon me. "Quit," said he, "the form of a man and take that of an ape." He instantly disappeared, and left me alone, transformed into an ape, and overwhelmed with sorrow, in a strange country, not knowing whether I was near or far from my father's dominions.

I descended the mountain, and entered a plain, level country, which took me a month to travel over, and then I came to the sea-side. It happened at the time to be perfectly calm, and I espied a vessel about half a league from the shore. Unwilling to lose so good an opportunity I broke off a large branch from a tree, carried it into the sea, and placed myself astride upon it, with a stick in each hand, to serve me for oars.

I launched out on this frail bark, and rowed toward the ship.

When I had approached sufficiently near to be seen, the seamen and passengers on the deck regarded me with astonishment. In the meantime I got on board, and laying hold of a rope, jumped upon the deck, but having lost my speech, I found myself in great perplexity ; and indeed the risk I ran was not less than when I was at the mercy of the genie.

The merchants, being both superstitious and scrupulous, thought if they received me on board I should be the occasion of some misfortune to them during the voyage. On this account they said, "Let us throw him into the sea." Some one of them would not have failed to carry this threat into execution, had I not gone to the captain, thrown myself at his feet, and taken hold of his skirt in a supplicating posture. This action, together with the tears which he saw gush from my eyes, moved his compassion. He took me under his protection, and loaded me with a thousand caresses. On my part, though I had not power to speak, I showed by my gestures every mark of gratitude in my power.

The wind that succeeded the calm continued to blow in the same direction for fifty days, and brought us safe to the port of a city, well peopled, and of great trade, where we cast anchor.

Our vessel was instantly surrounded with multitudes of boats full of people. Among the rest, some officers of the Sultan came on board, and said, "Our master rejoices in your safe arrival, and he beseeches each of you to write a few lines upon this roll. The Grand Vizier, who, besides, possessing great abilities for the management of public affairs could write in the highest perfection, died a few days since, and the Sultan has made a solemn vow not to give the place to any one who cannot write equally well. No one in the empire has been judged worthy to supply the Vizier's place."

Those of the merchants who thought they could write well enough to aspire to this high dignity wrote one after another what they thought fit. After they had done, I advanced, and took the roll, but all the people cried out that I would tear it or throw it into the sea, till they saw how properly I held the roll, and made a sign that I would write in my turn. Their apprehensions then changed into wonder. However, as they had never seen an ape that could write, and could not be persuaded that I was more ingenious than others of my kind, they wished to take the roll out of my hand ; but the captain took my part once more. "Let him alone," said he ; "allow him to write." Perceiving that no one opposed my design, I took the pen, and wrote six sorts of hands used among the Arabians, and each specimen contained an extemporary distich or quatrain (a stanza of four lines) in praise of the Sultan. When I had done, the officers took the roll, and carried it to the Sultan.

The Sultan took little notice of any of the writings except mine,

which pleased him so much that he said to the officers, "Take the finest horse in my stable, with the richest trappings and a robe of the most sumptuous brocade to put on the person who wrote the six hands, and bring him hither."

At this command the officers could not forbear laughing. The Sultan was incensed at their rudeness, and would have punished them, had they not explained. "Sir," said they, "we humbly beg your Majesty's pardon. These hands were not written by a man, but by an ape."

"What do you say?" exclaimed the Sultan. "Those admirable characters, are they not written by the hands of a man?"

"No, sir," replied the officers; "we assure your Majesty that it was an ape, who wrote them in our presence."

The Sultan was too much surprised at this account not to desire a sight of me, and therefore said, "Do what I command you, and bring me speedily that wonderful ape."

The officers returned to the vessel, and showed the captain their order, who answered, "The Sultan's command must be obeyed." Whereupon they clothed me with the rich brocade robe, and carried me ashore, where they set me on horseback, while the Sultan waited for me at his palace with a great number of courtiers.

The procession commenced; the harbour, the streets, the public places, windows, terraces, palaces, and houses were filled with an infinite number of people of all ranks, who flocked from every part of the city to see me; for the rumour was spread in a moment that the Sultan had chosen an ape to be his Grand Vizier; and after having served for a spectacle to the people, who could not forbear to express their surprise by redoubling their shouts and cries, I arrived at the Sultan's palace.

I found the Prince on his throne in the midst of the grandes; I made my obeisance three times very low, and at last kneeled and kissed the ground before him, and afterward took my seat in the posture of an ape. The whole assembly viewed me with admiration, and could not comprehend how it was possible that an ape should so well understand how to pay the Sultan his due respect; and he himself was more astonished than any. In short, the usual ceremony of the audience would have been complete, could I have added speech to my behaviour.

The Sultan dismissed his courtiers, and none remained by him but the chief of the attendants of the palace, a little young slave, and myself. He went from his chamber of audience into his own apartment, where he ordered dinner to be brought. As he sat at table, he made me a sign to approach and eat with them; to show my obedience, I kissed the ground, arose, and placed myself at the table, and ate.

.

Before the table was cleared, I espied a standish, which I made a sign to have brought me ; having got it, I wrote upon a large peach some verses expressive of my acknowledgment to the Sultan ; who, having read them, after I had presented the peach to him, was still more astonished. When the things were removed, they brought him a particular liquor, of which he caused them to give me a glass. I drank, and wrote upon the glass some new verses, which explained the state of happiness I was now in, after many sufferings. The Sultan read these likewise, and said, " A man that was capable of composing such poetry would rank among the greatest of men."

The Sultan caused to be brought to him a chess-board, and asked me by sign if I understood that game, and would play with him. I kissed the ground ; and laying my hand upon my head, signified that I was ready to receive that honour. He won the first game ; but I won the second and third ; and perceiving he was somewhat displeased at my success, I made a stanza to pacify him, in which I told him that two potent armies had been fighting furiously all day, but that they concluded a peace toward the evening, and passed the remaining part of the night very amicably together upon the field of battle.

So many circumstances appearing to the Sultan beyond what had ever either been seen or known of apes, he determined not to be the only witness of these prodigies himself, but having a daughter, called the Lady of Beauty, sent for her, that she should share his pleasure.

The Princess, who had her face unveiled, no sooner came into the room than she put on her veil, and said to the Sultan, " Sir, I am surprised that you have sent for me to appear before men. That seeming ape is a young Prince, son of a powerful Sultan, and has been metamorphosed into an ape by enchantment. When I was just out of the nursery, an old lady who waited on me was a most expert magician, and taught me seventy rules of magic. By this science I know all enchanted persons at first sight : I know who they are, and by whom they have been enchanted ; therefore do not be surprised if I should forthwith restore this Prince, in spite of the enchantments, to his own form."

" Do so, then," interrupted the Sultan, " for you cannot give me greater pleasure, as I wish to have him for my Grand Vizier, and bestow you upon him for a wife."

" I am ready, sire," answered the Princess, " to obey you in all things you please to command."

The Princess, the Lady of Beauty, went into her apartment, and brought thence a knife, which had some Hebrew words engraven on the blade : she made the Sultan, the little slave, and myself, descend into a private court of the palace, and there left us under a gallery

that went round it. She placed herself in the middle of the court, where she made a great circle, and within it she wrote several words in ancient Arabian characters.

When she had finished and prepared the circle, she placed herself in the centre of it, where she began incantations, and repeated verses of the Koran. The air grew insensibly dark, as if it had been night ; we found ourselves struck with consternation, and our fear increased when we saw the genie appear suddenly in the shape of a lion of gigantic size.

"Thou shalt pay dearly," said the lion, "for the trouble thou hast given me in coming here." In saying this, he opened his horrible jaws, and advanced forward to devour her ; but she, being on her guard, jumped back, and had just time to pluck out a hair ; and pronouncing two or three words, she changed it into a sharp scythe, with which she immediately cut the lion in two pieces, through the middle.

The two parts of the lion directly disappeared, and the head changed into a large scorpion. The Princess then took the form of a serpent, and fought the scorpion, which, finding itself defeated, changed into an eagle, and flew away. But the serpent then became another eagle, black, and very large, and went in pursuit of it. We now lost sight of them for some time.

Shortly after they had disappeared, the earth opened before us, and a black and white cat appeared, the hairs of which stood quite on end, and which made a most horrible mewling. A black wolf directly followed after her, and gave her no time to rest. The cat, being thus hard pressed, changed into a worm, and hid itself in a pomegranate which lay by accident on the ground ; but the pomegranate swelled immediately, and became as big as a gourd, which, lifting itself up to the roof of the gallery, rolled there for some time backward and forward ; it then fell down again into the court, and broke into several pieces.

The wolf had in the meanwhile transformed itself into a cock, and now fell to picking up the seeds of the pomegranate one after another ; but finding no more, he came toward us with his wings spread, making a great noise, as if he would ask us whether there were any more seed. There was one lying on the brink of the canal, which the cock perceiving as he went back, ran speedily thither ; but just as he was going to pick it up the seed rolled into a fountain and turned into a little fish.

The cock, flying toward the fountain, turned into a pike, and pursued the small fish ; they continued both under water above two hours, and we knew not what was become of them ; but suddenly we heard terrible cries, which made us tremble, and a little while after we saw the genie and Princess all in flames. They threw flashes

of fire out of their mouths at each other, till they came to close combat ; then the two fires increased, with a thick, burning smoke, which mounted so high that we had reason to apprehend it would set the palace on fire.

But we very soon had a more pressing occasion of fear, for the genie having got loose from the Princess, came to the gallery where we stood, and blew flames of fire upon us. We must all have perished had not the Princess, running to our assistance, forced him to retire, and defend himself against her ; yet, notwithstanding all her exertions, she could not hinder the Sultan's beard from being burned, and his face scorched, and a spark from entering my right eye, and making it blind. The Sultan and I expected nothing but death, when we heard a cry of " Victory, victory ! " and instantly the Princess appeared in her natural shape ; but the genie was reduced to a heap of ashes.

The Princess approached us and hastily called for a cupful of water, which the young slave, who had received no hurt, brought her. She took it, and after pronouncing some words over it, threw it upon me saying, " If thou art become an ape by enchantment, change thy shape, and take that of a man, which thou hadst before." These words were hardly uttered, when I again became a man in every respect as I was before my transformation, excepting the loss of my eye.

I was preparing to return the Princess my thanks, but she prevented me by addressing herself to her father : " Sire, I have gained the victory over the genie ; but it is a victory that costs me dear. I have but a few minutes to live ; the fire has pierced me during the terrible combat, and I find it is gradually consuming me. This would not have happened, had I perceived the last of the pomegranate seeds, and swallowed it, as I did the others when I was changed into a cock ; the genie had fled thither as to his last intrenchment, and upon that the success of the combat depended. This oversight obliged me to have recourse to fire, and to fight with those mighty arms as I did, between heaven and earth, in your presence ; for in spite of all, I made the genie know that I understood more than he ; I have conquered and reduced him to ashes, but I cannot escape death, which is approaching."

Suddenly the Princess exclaimed, " I burn, I burn ! " She found that the fire had at last seized upon her vital parts, which made her still cry, " I burn " ; until death had put an end to her intolerable pains. The effect of that fire was so extraordinary, that in a few moments she was wholly reduced to ashes, as the genie had been.

I cannot tell you how much I was grieved at so dismal a spectacle ; I had rather all my life have continued an ape or a dog, than to have seen my benefactress thus miserably perish. The Sultan cried

piteously, and beat himself on his head and breast, until, being quite overcome with grief, he fainted away. In the meantime, the attendants and officers came running at the Sultan's lamentations, and with much difficulty brought him to himself.

When the knowledge of the death of the Princess had spread through the palace and the city, all the people greatly bewailed. Public mourning was observed for seven days, and many ceremonies were performed. The ashes of the genie were thrown into the air ; but those of the Princess were collected into a precious urn, to be preserved ; and the urn was deposited in a superb mausoleum constructed for that purpose on the spot where the Princess had been consumed.

The grief of the Sultan for the loss of his daughter confined him to his chamber for a whole month. Before he had fully recovered his strength, he sent for me and said, " You are the cause of all these misfortunes ; depart hence therefore in peace, without further delay, and take care never to appear again in my dominions on penalty of thy life."

I was obliged to quit the palace, again cast down to a low estate, and an outcast from the world. Before I left the city, I went into a bagnio, where I caused my beard and eyebrows to be shaved, and put on a calender's robe. I passed through many countries without making myself known ; at last I resolved to visit Bagdad, in hope of meeting with the Commander of the Faithful, to move his compassion by relating to him my unfortunate adventures.

“ARABIAN NIGHTS”

ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

THERE once lived in a town of Persia two brothers, one named Cassim and the other Ali Baba. Their father divided a small inheritance equally between them. Cassim married a very rich wife, and became a wealthy merchant. Ali Baba married a woman as poor as himself, and lived by cutting wood, and bringing it upon three asses into the town to sell.

One day, when Ali Baba was in the forest, and had just cut wood enough to load his asses, he saw at a distance a great cloud of dust, which seemed to approach him. He observed it with attention, and distinguished soon after a body of horsemen, who he suspected might be robbers. He determined to leave his asses to save himself. He climbed up a large tree, planted on a high rock, whose branches were thick enough to conceal him, and yet enabled him to see all that passed without being discovered.

The troop, who were to the number of forty, all well mounted and armed, came to the foot of the rock on which the tree stood, and there dismounted. Every man unbridled his horse, tied him to some shrub, and hung about his neck a bag of corn which they brought behind them. Then each of them took off his saddle-bag, which seemed to Ali Baba to be full of gold and silver from its weight. One, whom he took to be their captain, came under the tree in which Ali Baba was concealed; and making his way through some shrubs, pronounced these words: “Open, Sesame!”¹ As soon as the captain of the robbers had thus spoken, a door opened in the rock; and after he had made all his troop enter before him, he followed them, when the door shut again of itself.

The robbers stayed some time within the rock, during which Ali Baba, fearful of being caught, remained in the tree.

At last the door opened again, and as the captain went in last, so he came out first, and stood to see them all pass by him, when Ali Baba heard him make the door close by pronouncing these words, “Shut, Sesame!” Every man at once went and bridled his horse,

¹ “Sesame” is a small grain.

fastened his wallet, and mounted again. When the captain saw them all ready, he put himself at their head, and they returned the way they had come.

Ali Baba followed them with his eyes as far as he could see them ; and afterward stayed a considerable time before he descended. Remembering the words the captain of the robbers used to cause the door to open and shut, he had the curiosity to try if his pronouncing them would have the same effect. Accordingly, he went among the shrubs, and perceiving the door concealed behind them, stood before it, and said, " Open, Sesame ! " The door instantly flew wide open.

Ali Baba, who expected a dark, dismal cavern, was surprised to see a well-lighted and spacious chamber, which received the light from an opening at the top of the rock, and in which were all sorts of provisions, rich bales of silk, stuff, brocade, and valuable carpeting, piled upon one another ; gold and silver ingots in great heaps, and money in bags. The sight of all these riches made him suppose that this cave must have been occupied for ages by robbers, who had succeeded one another.

Ali Baba went boldly into the cave, and collected as much of the gold coin, which was in bags, as he thought his three asses could carry. When he had loaded them with the bags, he laid wood over them in such a manner that they could not be seen. When he had passed in and out as often as he wished, he stood before the door, and pronouncing the words, " Shut, Sesame ! " the door closed of itself. He then made the best of his way to town.

When Ali Baba got home, he drove his asses into a little yard, shut the gates very carefully, threw off the wood that covered the panniers, carried the bags into his house, and ranged them in order before his wife. He then emptied the bags, which raised such a great heap of gold as dazzled his wife's eyes, and then he told her the whole adventure from beginning to end, and, above all, recommended her to keep it secret.

The wife rejoiced greatly at their good fortune, and would count all the gold piece by piece. " Wife," replied Ali Baba, " you do not know what you undertake, when you pretend to count the money ; you will never have done. I will dig a hole, and bury it. There is no time to be lost."

" You are in the right, husband," replied she, " but let us know, as nigh as possible, how much we have. I will borrow a small measure, and measure it, while you dig the hole."

Away the wife ran to her brother-in-law Cassim, who lived just by, and addressing herself to his wife, desired her to lend her a measure for a little while. Her sister-in-law asked her whether she would have a great or a small one. The other asked for a small one. She bade her stay a little, and she would readily fetch one.

The sister-in-law did so, but as she knew Ali Baba's poverty, she was curious to know what sort of grain his wife wanted to measure, and artfully putting some suet at the bottom of the measure, brought it to her, with an excuse that she was sorry that she had made her stay so long, but that she could not find it sooner.

Ali Baba's wife went home, set the measure upon the heap of gold, filled it, and emptied it often upon the sofa, till she had done, when she was very well satisfied to find the number of measures amounted to so many as they did, and went to tell her husband, who had almost finished digging the hole. While Ali Baba was burying the gold, his wife, to show her exactness and diligence to her sister-in-law, carried the measure back again, but without taking notice that a piece of gold had stuck to the bottom. "Sister," said she, giving it to her again, "you see that I have not kept your measure long. I am obliged to you for it, and return it with thanks."

As soon as Ali Baba's wife was gone, Cassim's looked at the bottom of the measure, and was in inexpressible surprise to find a piece of gold sticking to it. Envy immediately possessed her breast. "What!" said she, "has Ali Baba gold so plentiful as to measure it? Whence has he all this wealth?"

Cassim, her husband, was at his counting-house. When he came home, his wife said to him, "Cassim, I know you think yourself rich, but Ali Baba is infinitely richer than you. He does not count his money, but measures it." Cassim desired her to explain the riddle, which she did, by telling him the stratagem she had used to make the discovery, and showed him the piece of money, which was so old that they could not tell in what prince's reign it was coined.)

Cassim, after he had married the rich widow, had never treated Ali Baba as a brother, but neglected him; and now, instead of being pleased, he conceived a base envy at his brother's prosperity. He could not sleep all that night, and went to him in the morning before sunrise. "Ali Baba," said he, "I am surprised at you; you pretend to be miserably poor, and yet you measure gold. My wife found this at the bottom of the measure you borrowed yesterday."

By this discourse, Ali Baba perceived that Cassim and his wife, through his own wife's folly, knew what they had so much reason to conceal; but what was done could not be undone. Therefore, without showing the least surprise or trouble, he confessed all, and offered his brother part of his treasure to keep the secret.

"I expect as much," replied Cassim haughtily; "but I must know exactly where this treasure is, and how I may visit it myself when I choose; otherwise, I will go and inform against you, and then you will not only get no more, but will lose all you have, and I shall have a share for my information."

Ali Baba told him all he desired, even to the very words he was to

use to gain admission into the cave.

Cassim rose the next morning long before the sun, and set out for the forest with ten mules bearing great chests, which he designed to fill, and followed the road which Ali Baba had pointed out to him. He was not long before he reached the rock, and found out the place, by the tree and other marks which his brother had given him. When he reached the entrance of the cavern, he pronounced the words, "Open, Sesame!"

The door immediately opened, and, when he was in, closed upon him. In examining the cave, he was in great admiration to find much more riches than he had expected from Ali Baba's relation. He quickly laid as many bags of gold as he could carry at the door of the cavern; but his thoughts were so full of the great riches he should possess, that he could not think of the necessary word to make it open, but instead of "Sesame," said, "Open, Barley!" and was much amazed to find that the door remained fast shut. He named several sorts of grain, but still the door would not open.

Cassim had never expected such an incident, and was so alarmed at the danger he was in, that the more he endeavoured to remember the word "Sesame," the more his memory was confounded, and he had as much forgotten it as if he had never heard it mentioned. He threw down the bags he had loaded himself with, and walked distractedly up and down the cave, without having the least regard to the riches that were round him.

About noon the robbers visited their cave. At some distance they saw Cassim's mules straggling about the rock, with great chests on their backs. Alarmed at this, they galloped at full speed to the cave. They drove away the mules, who strayed through the forest so far that they were soon out of sight, and went directly, with their naked sabres in their hands, to the door, which, on their captain pronouncing the proper words, immediately opened.

Cassim, who heard the noise of the horses' feet, at once guessed the arrival of the robbers, and resolved to make one effort for his life. He rushed to the door, and no sooner saw the door open than he ran out and threw the leader down, but could not escape the other robbers, who with their scimitars soon deprived him of life.

The first care of the robbers after this was to examine the cave. They found all the bags which Cassim had brought to the door, to be ready to load his mules, and carried them again to their places, but they did not miss what Ali Baba had taken away before. Then holding a council, and deliberating upon this occurrence, they guessed that Cassim, when he was in, could not get out again, but could not imagine how he had learned the secret words by which alone he could enter. They could not deny the fact of his being there; and to terrify any person or accomplice, who should attempt

the same thing, they agreed to cut Cassim's body into four quarters—to hang two on one side and two on the other, within the door of the cave.

They had no sooner taken this resolution than they put it in execution ; and when they had nothing more to detain them, left the place of their hoards well closed. They mounted their horses, went to beat the roads again, and to attack the caravans they might meet.

In the meantime, Cassim's wife was very uneasy when night came and her husband was not returned. She ran to Ali Baba in great alarm, and said : " I believe, brother-in-law, that you know Cassim is gone to the forest, and upon what account ; it is now night, and he has not returned ; I am afraid some misfortune has happened to him." Ali Baba told her that she need not frighten herself, for that certainly Cassim would not think it proper to come into the town till the night should be pretty far advanced.

Cassim's wife, considering how much it concerned her husband to keep the business secret, was the more easily persuaded to believe her brother-in-law. She went home again, and waited patiently till midnight. Then her fear redoubled, and her grief was the more sensible because she was forced to keep it to herself. She repented of her foolish curiosity, and cursed her desire of prying into the affairs of her brother- and sister-in-law. She spent all the night in weeping ; and as soon as it was day went to them, telling them, by her tears, the cause of her coming.

Ali Baba did not wait for his sister-in-law to desire him to go to see what was become of Cassim, but departed immediately with his three asses, begging of her first to moderate her affliction. He went to the forest, and when he came near the rock, having seen neither his brother nor the mules in his way, was seriously alarmed at finding some blood spilt near the door, which he took for an ill omen ; but when he had pronounced the word, and the door had opened, he was struck with horror at the dismal sight of his brother's body.

He was not long in determining how he should pay the last dues to his brother ; but without adverting to the little fraternal affection he had shown for him, went into the cave, to find something to enshroud his remains ; and having loaded one of his asses with them, covered them over with wood. The other two asses he loaded with bags of gold, covering them with wood also as before ; and then bidding the door shut, came away ; but was so cautious as to stop some time at the end of the forest, that he might not go into the town before night. When he came home, he drove the asses loaded with gold into his little yard, and left the care of unloading them to his wife, while he led the other to his sister-in-law's house.

Ali Baba knocked at the door, which was opened by Morgiana, a clever, intelligent slave, who was fruitful in inventions to meet the

most difficult circumstances. When he came into the court, he unloaded the ass, and taking Morgiana aside, said to her : " You must observe an inviolable secrecy. Your master's body is contained in these two panniers. We must bury him as if he had died a natural death. Go now and tell your mistress. I leave the matter to your wit and skilful devices.

Ali Baba helped to place the body in Cassim's house, again recommended to Morgiana to act her part well, and then returned with his ass.

Morgiana went out early the next morning to a druggist, and asked for a sort of lozenge which was considered efficacious in the most dangerous disorders. The apothecary inquired who was ill. She replied, with a sigh : " Her good master, Cassim himself : and that he could neither eat nor speak."

In the evening Morgiana went to the same druggist's again, and with tears in her eyes asked for an essence which they used to give to sick people only when at the last extremity. " Alas !" said she, taking it from the apothecary, " I am afraid that this remedy will have no better effect than the lozenges ; and that I shall lose my good master."

On the other hand, as Ali Baba and his wife were often seen to go between Cassim's and their own house all that day, and to seem melancholy, nobody was surprised in the evening to hear the lamentable shrieks and cries of Cassim's wife and Morgiana, who gave out everywhere that her master was dead. The next morning, at day-break, Morgiana went to an old cobbler whom she knew to be always early at his stall, and, bidding him good-morrow, put a piece of gold into his hand, saying, " Baba Mustapha, you must bring with you your sewing tackle, and come with me ; but I must tell you, I shall blindfold you when you come to such a place."

Baba Mustapha seemed to hesitate a little at these words. " Oh ! oh ! " replied he, " you would have me do something against my conscience, or against my honour ? "

" God forbid," said Morgiana, putting another piece of gold into his hand, " that I should ask anything that is contrary to your honour ! only come along with me and fear nothing."

Baba Mustapha went with Morgiana, who, after she had bound his eyes with a handkerchief at the place she had mentioned, conveyed him to her deceased master's house, and never unloosed his eyes till he had entered the room where she had put the corpse together. " Baba Mustapha," said she, " you must make haste and sew the parts of this body together ; and when you have done I will give you another piece of gold."

After Baba Mustapha had finished his task, she blindfolded him again, gave him the third piece of gold as she had promised, and re-

commending secrecy to him carried him back to the place where she first bound his eyes, pulled off the bandage, and let him go home, but watched him that he returned toward his stall till he was quite out of sight, for fear he should have the curiosity to return and dodge her ; she then went home.

Morgiana, on her return, warmed some water to wash the body, and at the same time Ali Baba perfumed it with incense, and wrapped it in the burying clothes with the accustomed ceremonies. Not long after the proper officer brought the bier, and when the attendants of the mosque, whose business it was to wash the dead, offered to perform their duty, she told them that it was done already.

Shortly after this, the imaum and the other ministers of the mosque arrived. Four neighbours carried the corpse to the burying-ground, following the imaum, who recited some prayers. Ali Baba came after with some neighbours, who often relieved the others in carrying the bier to the burying-ground. Morgiana, a slave to the deceased, following in the procession, weeping, beating her breast, and tearing her hair. Cassim's wife stayed at home mourning, uttering lamentable cries with the women of the neighbourhood, who came, according to custom, during the funeral, and, joining their lamentations with hers, filled the quarter far and near with sounds of sorrow.

In this manner Cassim's melancholy death was concealed and hushed up between Ali Baba, his widow, and Morgiana, his slave, with so much contrivance that nobody in the city had the least knowledge or suspicion of the cause of it. Three or four days after the funeral, Ali Baba removed his few goods openly to his sister-in-law's house, in which it was agreed that he should in future live; but the money he had taken from the robbers he conveyed thither by night. As for Cassim's warehouse, he entrusted it entirely to the management of his eldest son.

While these things were being done, the forty robbers again visited their retreat in the forest. Great, then, was their surprise to find Cassim's body taken away, with some of their bags of gold. "We are certainly discovered," said the captain. "The removal of the body, and the loss of some of our money, plainly shows that the man whom we killed had an accomplice : and for our own lives' sake we must try and find him. What say you, my lads ?"

All the robbers unanimously approved of the captain's proposal. "Well," said the captain, "one of you, the boldest and most skilful among you, must go into the town, disguised as a traveller and a stranger, to try if he can hear any talk of the man whom we have killed, and endeavour to find out who he was and where he lived. This is a matter of the first importance, and for fear of any treachery

I propose that whoever undertakes this business without success, even though the failure arises only from an error of judgment, shall suffer death."

Without waiting for the sentiments of his companions, one of the robbers started up, and said: "I submit to this condition, and think it an honour to expose my life to serve the troop."

After this robber had received great commendations from the captain and his comrades, he disguised himself so that nobody would take him for what he was; and taking his leave of the troop that night, went into the town just at daybreak; and walked up and down, till accidentally he came to Baba Mustapha's stall, which was always open before any of the shops.

Baba Mustapha was seated with an awl in his hand, just going to work. The robber saluted him, bidding him good-morrow; and perceiving that he was old, said: "Honest man, you begin to work very early, is it possible that one of your age can see so well? I question, even if it were somewhat lighter, whether you could see to stitch."

"You do not know me," replied Baba Mustapha; "for old as I am, I have extraordinarily good eyes; and you will not doubt it when I tell you that I sewed the body of a dead man together in a place where I had not so much light as I have now."

"A dead body!" exclaimed the robber, with affected amazement.

"Yes, yes," answered Baba Mustapha, "I see you want to have me speak out, but you shall know no more."

The robber felt sure that he had discovered what he sought. He pulled out a piece of gold, and putting it into Baba Mustapha's hand, said to him: "I do not want to learn your secret, though I can assure you you might safely trust me with it. The only thing I desire of you is to show me the house where you stitched up the dead body."

"If I were disposed to do you that favour," replied Baba Mustapha, "I assure you I cannot. I was taken to a certain place, whence I was led blindfold to the house, and afterward brought back again in the same manner; you see, therefore, the impossibility of my doing what you desire."

"Well," replied the robber, "you may, however, remember a little of the way that you were led blindfold. Come, let me bind your eyes at the same place. We will walk together; perhaps you may recognise some part; and as everybody ought to be paid for their trouble, there is another piece of gold for you; gratify me in what I ask you." So saying, he put another piece of gold into his hand.

The two pieces of gold were great temptations to Baba Mustapha. He looked at them a long time in his hand, without saying a word, but at last he pulled out his purse and put them in. "I cannot

promise," he said to the robber, "that I can remember the way exactly; but since you desire, I will try what I can do." At these words Baba Mustapha rose up, to the great joy of the robber, and led him to the place where Morgiana had bound his eyes. "It was here," said Baba Mustapha, "I was blindfolded; and I turned this way."

The robber tied his handkerchief over his eyes, and walked by him till he stopped directly at Cassim's house, where Ali Babi then lived. The thief, before he pulled off the band, marked the door with a piece of chalk, which he had ready in his hand, and then asked him if he knew whose house that was; to which Baba Mustapha replied, that as he did not live in that neighbourhood, he could not tell.

The robber, finding he could discover no more from Baba Mustapha, thanked him for the trouble he had taken, and left him to go back to his stall, while he returned to the forest, persuaded that he should be very well received.

A little after the robber and Baba Mustapha had parted, Morgiana went out of Ali Baba's house upon some errand, and upon her return, seeing the mark the robber had made, stopped to observe it. "What can be the meaning of this mark?" said she to herself; "somebody intends my master no good: however, with whatever intention it was done, it is advisable to guard against the worst." Accordingly, she fetched a piece of chalk, and marked two or three doors on each side, in the same manner, without saying a word to her master or mistress.

In the meantime, the robber rejoined his troop in the forest, and recounted to them his success; expatiating upon his good fortune, in meeting so soon with the only person who could inform him of what he wanted to know. All the robbers listened to him with the utmost satisfaction; when the captain, after commending his diligence, addressing himself to them all, said: "Comrades, we have no time to lose: let us set off well armed, without its appearing who we are; but that we may not excite any suspicion, let only one or two go into the town together, and join at our rendezvous, which shall be the great square. In the meantime, our comrade who brought us the good news and I will go and find out the house, that we may consult what had best be done."

This speech and plan was approved of by all, and they were soon ready. They filed off in parties of two each, after some interval of time, and got into the town without being in the least suspected. The captain, and he who had visited the town in the morning as spy, came in the last. He led the captain into the street where he had marked Ali Baba's residence; and when they came to the first of the houses which Morgiana had marked, he pointed it out. But the captain observed that the next door was chalked in the same manner,

and in the same place ; and showing it to his guide, asked him which house it was—that, or the first.

The guide was so confounded, that he knew not what answer to make ; but still more puzzled, when he and the captain saw five or six houses similarly marked. He assured the captain, with an oath, that he had marked but one, and could not tell who had chalked the rest, so that he could not distinguish the house which the cobbler had stopped at.

The captain, finding that their design had proved abortive, went directly to the place of rendezvous, and told his troop that they had lost their labour, and must return to their cave. He himself set them the example, and they all returned as they had come.

When the troop was all got together, the captain told them the reason of their returning ; and presently the conductor was declared by all worthy of death. He condemned himself, acknowledging that he ought to have taken better precaution, and prepared to receive the stroke from him who was appointed to cut off his head.

But as the safety of the troop required the discovery of the second intruder into the cave, another of the gang, who promised himself that he should succeed better, presented himself, and his offer being accepted, he went and corrupted Baba Mustapha, as the other had done ; and being shown the house, marked it in a place more remote from sight, with red chalk.

Not long after, Morgiana, whose eyes nothing could escape, went out, and seeing the red chalk, and arguing with herself as she had done before, marked the other neighbours' houses in the same place and manner.

The robber, on his return to his company, prided himself much on the precaution he had taken, which he looked upon as an infallible way of distinguishing Ali Baba's house from the others ; and the captain and all of them thought it must succeed. They conveyed themselves into the town with the same precaution as before ; but when the robber and his captain came into the street, they found the same difficulty ; at which the captain was enraged, and the robber in as great confusion as his predecessor.

Thus the captain and his troop were forced to retire a second time, and much more dissatisfied ; while the robber who had been the author of the mistake underwent the same punishment, which he willingly submitted to.

The captain, having lost two brave fellows of his troop, was afraid of diminishing it too much by pursuing this plan to get information of the residence of their plunderer. He found by their example that their heads were not so good as their hands on such occasions ; and therefore resolved to take upon himself the important commission.

Accordingly, he went and addressed himself to Baba Mustapha,

who did him the same service he had done to the other robbers. He did not set any particular mark on the house, but examined and observed it so carefully, by passing often by it, that it was impossible for him to mistake it.

The captain, well satisfied with his attempt, and informed of what he wanted to know, returned to the forest ; and when he came into the cave, where the troop waited for him, said : " Now, comrades, nothing can prevent our full revenge, as I am certain of the house ; and in my way hither I have thought how to put it into execution, but if any one can form a better expedient, let him communicate it."

He then told them his contrivance ; and as they approved of it ordered them to go into the villages about, and buy nineteen mules with thirty-eight large leather jars, one full of oil, and the other empty.

In two or three days' time the robbers had purchased the mules and jars, and as the mouths of the jars were rather too narrow for purpose, the captain caused them to be widened, and after having put one of his men into each, with the weapons which he thought fit, leaving open the seam which had been undone to leave them room to breathe, he rubbed the jars on the outside with oil from the full vessel.

Things being thus prepared, when the nineteen mules were loaded with thirty-seven robbers in jars, and the jar of oil, the captain, as their driver, set out with them, and reached the town by the dusk of the evening, as he had intended. He led them through the streets, till he came to Ali Baba's, at whose door he designed to have knocked ; but was prevented by his sitting there after supper to take a little fresh air. He stopped his mules, addressed himself to him, and said : " I have brought some oil a great way, to sell at to-morrow's market ; and it is now so late that I do not know where to lodge. If I should not be troublesome to you, do me the favour to let me pass the night with you, and I shall be very much obliged by your hospitality."

Though Ali Baba had seen the captain of the robbers in the forest and had heard him speak, it was impossible to know him in the disguise of an oil merchant. He told him he should be welcome, and immediately opened his gates for the mules to go into the yard. At the same time he called to a slave, and ordered him, when the mules were unloaded, to put them into the stable, and to feed them ; and then went to Morgiana, to bid her get a good supper for his guest. After they had finished supper, Ali Baba, charging Morgiana afterwards to take care of his guest, said to her : " To-morrow morning design to go to the bath before day ; take care my bathing linen is ready, give it to Abdalla (which was the slave's name), and make me some good broth against my return." After this he went to bed.

In the meantime the captain of the robbers went into the yard, and took off the lid of each jar, and gave his people orders what to do. Beginning at the first jar, and so on to the last, he said to each man : " As soon as I throw some stones out of the chamber window where I lie, do not fail to come out, and I will immediately join you." After this he returned into the house, when Morgiana, taking up a light, conducted him to his chamber, where she left him ; and he, to avoid any suspicion, put the light out soon after, and laid himself down in his clothes, that he might be the more ready to rise.

Morgiana, remembering Ali Baba's orders, got his bathing linen ready, and ordered Abdalla to set on the pot for the broth ; but while she was preparing it the lamp went out, and there was no more oil in the house, nor any candles. What to do she did not know, for the broth must be made. Abdalla, seeing her very uneasy, said : " Do not fret and tease yourself, but go into the yard, and take some oil out of one of the jars."

Morgiana thanked Abdalla for his advice, took the oil-pot, and went into the yard ; when, as she came nigh the first jar, the robber within said softly, " Is it time ? "

Though naturally much surprised at finding a man in the jar instead of the oil she wanted, she immediately felt the importance of keeping silence, as Ali Baba, his family, and herself were in great danger ; and collecting herself, without showing the least emotion, she answered, " Not yet, but presently." She went quietly in this manner to all the jars, giving the same answer, till she came to the jar of oil.

By this means Morgiana found that her master Ali Baba had admitted thirty-eight robbers into his house, and that this pretended oil merchant was their captain. She made what haste she could to fill her oil-pot, and returned into her kitchen, where, as soon as she had lighted her lamp, she took a great kettle, went again to the oil-jar, filled the kettle, set it on a large wood fire, and as soon as it boiled, went and poured enough into every jar to stifle and destroy the robber within.

When this action, worthy of the courage of Morgiana, was executed without any noise, as she had projected, she returned into the kitchen with the empty kettle ; and having put out the great fire she had made to boil the oil, and leaving just enough to make the broth, put out the lamp also, and remained silent, resolving not to go to rest till she had observed what might follow through a window of the kitchen, which opened into the yard.

She had not waited long before the captain of the robbers got up, opened the window, and finding no light, and hearing no noise, or any one stirring in the house, gave the appointed signal, by throwing little stones, several of which hit the jars, as he doubted not by the

sound they gave. He then listened, but not hearing or perceiving anything whereby he could judge that his companions stirred, he began to grow very uneasy, threw stones again a second and also a third time, and could not comprehend the reason that none of them should answer his signal.

Much alarmed, he went softly down into the yard, and going to the first jar, while asking the robber, whom he thought alive, if he was in readiness, smelt the hot boiled oil, which sent forth a steam out of the jar. Hence he suspected that his plot to murder Ali Baba, and plunder his house, was discovered. Examining all the jars, one after another, he found that all his gang were dead; and, enraged to despair at having failed in his design, he forced the lock of a door that led from the yard to the garden, and climbing over the walls made his escape.

When Morgiana saw him depart, she went to bed, satisfied and pleased to have succeeded so well in saving her master and family.

Ali Baba rose before day, and, followed by his slave, went to the baths, entirely ignorant of the important event which had happened at home.

When he returned from the baths, he was very much surprised to see the oil-jars, and that the merchant was not gone with the mules. He asked Morgiana, who opened the door, the reason of it. "My good master," answered she, "God preserve you and all your family. You will be better informed of what you wish to know when you have seen what I have to show you, if you will follow me."

As soon as Morgiana had shut the door, Ali Baba followed her, when she requested him to look into the first jar, and see if there was any oil. Ali Baba did so, and seeing a man, started back in alarm, and cried out.

"Do not be afraid," said Morgiana, "the man you see there can do neither you nor anybody else any harm. He is dead."

"Ah, Morgiana," said Ali Baba, "what is it you show me? Explain yourself."

"I will," replied Morgiana. "Moderate your astonishment, and do not excite the curiosity of your neighbours; for it is of great importance to keep this affair secret. Look into all the other jars."

Ali Baba examined all the other jars, one after another; and when he came to that which had the oil in, found it prodigiously sunk, and stood for some time motionless, sometimes looking at the jars, and sometimes at Morgiana, without saying a word, so great was his surprise. At last, when he had recovered himself, he said, "And what is become of the merchant?"

"Merchant!" answered she; "he is as much one as I am. I will tell you who he is, and what is become of him; but you had

better hear the story in your own chamber ; for it is time for your health that you had your broth after your bathing."

Morgiana then told him all she had done, from the first observing the mark upon the house, to the destruction of the robbers, and the flight of their captain.

On hearing of these brave deeds from the lips of Morgiana, Ali Baba said to her, " God, by your means, has delivered me from the snares these robbers laid for my destruction. I owe, therefore, my life to you ; and, for the first token of my acknowledgment, give you your liberty from this moment, till I can complete your recompense as I intend."

Ali Baba's garden was very long, and shaded at the farther end by a great number of large trees. Near these he and the slave Abdalla dug a trench, long and wide enough to hold the bodies of the robbers; and as the earth was light, they were not long in doing it. When this was done, Ali Baba hid the jars and weapons ; and as he had no occasion for the mules, he sent them at different times to be sold in the market by his slave.

While Ali Baba took these measures, the captain of the forty robbers returned to the forest with inconceivable mortification. He did not stay long ; the loneliness of the gloomy cavern became frightful to him. He determined, however, to avenge the fate of his companions, and to accomplish the death of Ali Baba. For this purpose he returned to the town, and took a lodging in a khan, and disguised himself as a merchant in silks. Under this assumed character he gradually conveyed a great many sorts of rich stuffs and fine linen to his lodging from the cavern, but with all the necessary precautions to conceal the place whence he brought them. In order to dispose of the merchandise, when he had thus amassed them together, he took a warehouse, which happened to be opposite to Cassim's, which Ali Baba's son had occupied since the death of his uncle.

He took the name of Cogia Houssain, and, as a new-comer, was, according to custom, extremely civil and complaisant to all the merchants his neighbours. Ali Baba's son was, from his vicinity, one of the first to converse with Cogia Houssain, who strove to cultivate his friendship more particularly. Two or three days after he was settled Ali Baba came to see his son, and the captain of the robbers recognised him at once, and soon learned from his son who he was. After this he increased his assiduities, caressed him in the most engaging manner, made him some small presents, and often asked him to dine and sup with him, when he treated him very handsomely.

Ali Baba's son did not choose to lie under such obligation to Cogia Houssain ; but was so much straitened for want of room in his house,

that he could not entertain him. He therefore acquainted his father, Ali Baba, with his wish to invite him in return.

Ali Baba with great pleasure took the treat upon himself. "Son," said he, "to-morrow being Friday, which is a day that the shops of such great merchants as Cogia Houssain and yourself are shut, get him to accompany you, and as you pass by my door, call in. I will go and order Morgiana to provide a supper."

The next day Ali Baba's son and Cogia Houssain met by appointment, took their walk, and as they returned, Ali Baba's son led Cogia Houssain through the street where his father lived, and when they came to the house, stopped and knocked at the door. "This, sir," said he, "is my father's house, who, from the account I have given him of your friendship, charged me to procure him the honour of your acquaintance; and I desire you to add this pleasure to those for which I am already indebted to you."

Though it was the sole aim of Cogia Houssain to introduce himself into Ali Baba's house, that he might kill him, without hazarding his own life or making any noise, yet he excused himself, and offered to take his leave; but a slave having opened the door, Ali Baba's son took him obligingly by the hand, and, in a manner, forced him in.

Ali Baba received Cogia Houssain with a smiling countenance, and in the most obliging manner he could wish. He thanked him for all the favours he had done his son; adding withal, the obligation was the greater as he was a young man, not much acquainted with the world, and that he might contribute to his information.

Cogia Houssain returned the compliment by assuring Ali Baba, that though his son might not have acquired the experience of older men, he had good sense equal to the experience of many others. After a little more conversation on different subjects, he offered again to take his leave, when Ali Baba, stopping him, said, "Where are you going, sir, in so much haste? I beg you would do me the honour to sup with me though my entertainment may not be worthy your acceptance; such as it is, I heartily offer it."

"Sir," replied Cogia Houssain, "I am thoroughly persuaded of your good-will; but the truth is, I can eat no victuals that have any salt in them; therefore judge how I should feel at your table."

"If that is the only reason," said Ali Baba, "it ought not to deprive me of the honour of your company; for, in the first place, there is no salt ever put into my bread, and as to the meat we shall have to-night, I promise you there shall be none in that. Therefore you must do me the favour to stay. I will return immediately."

Ali Baba went into the kitchen, and ordered Morgiana to put no salt to the meat that was to be dressed that night; and to make quickly two or three ragouts besides what he had ordered, but be sure to put no salt in them.

Morgiana, who was always ready to obey her master, could not help being surprised at his strange order. "Who is this strange man," said she, "who eats no salt with his meat? Your supper will be spoiled, if I keep it back so long."

"Do not be angry, Morgiana," replied Ali Baba; "he is an honest man, therefore do as I bid you."

Morgiana obeyed, though with no little reluctance, and had a curiosity to see this man who ate no salt. To this end, when she had finished what she had to do in the kitchen, she helped Abdalla to carry up the dishes; and looking at Cogia Houssain, knew him at first sight, notwithstanding his disguise, to be the captain of the robbers, and examining him very carefully, perceived that he had a dagger under his garment. "I am not in the least amazed," said she to herself, "that this wicked man, who is my master's greatest enemy, would eat no salt with him, since he intends to assassinate him; but I will prevent him."

Morgiana, while they were at supper, determined in her own mind to execute one of the boldest acts ever meditated. When Abdalla came for the dessert of fruit, and had put it with the wine and glasses before Ali Baba, Morgiana retired, dressed herself neatly, with a suitable head-dress like a dancer, girded her waist with a silver-gilt girdle, from which there hung a poniard with a hilt and guard of the same metal, and put a handsome mask on her face. When she had thus disguised herself, she said to Abdalla, "Take your tabor, and let us go and divert our master and his son's friend, as we do sometimes when he is alone."

Abdalla took his tabor and played all the way into the hall before Morgiana, who, when she came to the door, made a low obeisance by way of asking leave to exhibit her skill, while Abdalla left off playing. "Come in, Morgiana," said Ali Baba, "and let Cogia Houssain see what you can do, that he may tell us what he thinks of your performance."

Cogia Houssain, who did not expect this diversion after supper, began to fear he should not be able to take advantage of the opportunity he thought he had found; but hoped, if he now missed his aim, to secure it another time, by keeping up a friendly correspondence with the father and son; therefore, though he could have wished Ali Baba would have declined the dance, he pretended to be obliged to him for it, and had the complaisance to express his satisfaction at what he saw, which pleased his host.

As soon as Abdalla saw that Ali Baba and Cogia Houssain had done talking, he began to play on the tabor, and accompanied it with an air, to which Morgiana, who was an excellent performer, danced in such a manner as would have created admiration in any company.

After she had danced several dances with much grace, she drew the poniard, and holding it in her hand, began a dance, in which she outdid herself by the many different figures, light movements, and the surprising leaps and wonderful exertions with which she accompanied it. Sometimes she presented the poniard to one breast, sometimes to another, and oftentimes seemed to strike her own. At last, she snatched the tabor from Abdalla with her left hand, and holding the dagger in her right presented the other side of the tabor, after the manner of those who get a livelihood by dancing, and solicit the liberality of the spectators.

Ali Baba put a piece of gold into the tabor, as did also his son ; and Cogia Houssain seeing that she was coming to him, had pulled his purse out of his bosom to make her a present ; but while he was putting his hand into it, Morgiana, with a courage and resolution worthy of herself, plunged the poniard into his heart.

Ali Baba and his son, shocked at this action, cried out aloud. “ Unhappy woman ! ” exclaimed Ali Baba, “ what have you done to ruin me and my family ? ”

“ It was to preserve, not to ruin you,” answered Morgiana, “ for see here,” continued she, opening the pretended Cogia Hous-sain’s garment, and showing the dagger, “ what an enemy you had entertained ? Look well at him, and you will find him to be both the fictitious oil merchant and the captain of the gang of forty robbers. Remember, too, that he would eat no salt with you ; and what would you have more to persuade you of his wicked design ? Before I saw him, I suspected him as soon as you told me you had such a guest. I knew him, and you now find that my suspicion was not groundless.”

Ali Baba, who immediately felt the new obligation he had to Morgiana for saving his life a second time, embraced her : “ Morgiana,” said he, “ I gave you your liberty, and then promised you that my gratitude should not stop there, but that I would soon give you higher proofs of its sincerity, which I now do by making you my daughter-in-law.”

Then addressing himself to his son, he said, “ I believe you, son, to be so dutiful a child, that you will not refuse Morgiana for your wife. You see that Cogia Houssain sought your friendship with a treacherous design to take away my life ; and if he had succeeded, there is no doubt that he would have sacrificed you also to his revenge. Consider, that by marrying Morgiana you marry the preserver of my family and your own.”

The son, far from showing any dislike, readily consented to the marriage ; not only because he would not disobey his father, but also because it was agreeable to his inclination. After this they thought of burying the captain of the robbers with his comrades, and

did it so privately that nobody discovered their bones till many years after, when no one had any concern in the publication of this remarkable history.

A few days afterward, Ali Baba celebrated the nuptials of his son and Morgiana with great solemnity, a sumptuous feast, and the usual dancing and spectacles ; and had the satisfaction to see that his friends and neighbours, whom he invited, had no knowledge of the true motives of the marriage ; but that those who were not unacquainted with Morgiana's good qualities commended his generosity and goodness of heart. Ali Baba did not visit the robber's cave for a whole year, as he supposed the other two, whom he could get no account of, might be alive.

At the year's end, when he found they had not made any attempt to disturb him, he had the curiosity to make another journey. He mounted his horse, and when he came to the cave he alighted, tied his horse to a tree, and, approaching the entrance, pronounced the words, " Open, Sesame ! " whereupon the door opened.

He entered the cavern, and by the condition he found things in, judged that nobody had been there since the captain had fetched the goods for his shop. From this time he believed he was the only person in the world who had the secret of opening the cave, and that all the treasure was at his sole disposal. He put as much gold into his saddle-bag as his horse would carry, and returned to town. Some years later he carried his son to the cave and taught him the secret, which he handed down to his posterity, who, by using their good fortune with moderation, lived in great honour and splendour.

“ARABIAN NIGHTS”

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

THERE was in former times at Kashgar, on the extreme boundaries of Tartary, a tailor who was married to a wife to whom he was tenderly attached. One day while he was at work, a little hunchback seated himself at the shop door, and began to sing and play upon a tabor. The tailor was pleased with his performance, and resolved to take him to his house to entertain his wife. Immediately after their arrival, the tailor's wife placed before them a dish of fish; but as the little man was eating, he unluckily swallowed a bone, which, notwithstanding all that the tailor and his wife could do, choked him. This accident greatly alarmed them both, lest they should be punished as murderers. Now, it so happened that a doctor, a Jew, lived close by, and the tailor and his wife devised a scheme for placing the body of the dwarf in his house. On their knocking at the door, the servant-maid came down without any light, and asked what they wanted.

“Go and tell your master,” said the tailor, putting a piece of money in her hand, “we have brought him a man who is ill, and want his advice.”

While the servant was gone up to inform her master, the tailor and his wife hastily conveyed the body of the hunchback, supposed to be dead, to the head of the stairs, and leaving it there, hurried away.

In the meantime the doctor, transported with joy at being paid beforehand, hastily ran toward the head of the stairs without waiting for a light, and came against the body of the hunchback with so much violence, that he precipitated it to the bottom.

“Bring me a light!” cried he to the maid; “quick, quick!”

At last she brought a light, and he went downstairs with her; but when he saw what he had done, “Unhappy man that I am!” said he, “why did I attempt to come without a light? I have killed the poor fellow who was brought to me to be cured; and unless Esdra's ass come to assist me the authorities will be here, and drag me out of my house for a murderer.”

The doctor then called his wife, and consulted with her how to dispose of the dead body during the night. The doctor racked his brain in vain ; he could not think of any stratagem to relieve his embarrassment ; but his wife, who was more fertile in invention, said : " A thought has just come into my head ; carry the dead body to the terrace of our house, and let it down the chimney of our Mussulman neighbour."

This Mussulman was one of the Sultan's purveyors for furnishing oil, butter, and articles of a similar nature, and had a magazine in his house, where the rats and mice made prodigious havoc.

The Jewish doctor approving the proposed expedient, his wife and he took the little dwarf up to the roof of the house, and, placing ropes under his arm-pits, let him down the chimney into the purveyor's chamber so dexterously that he stood upright against the wall, as if he had been alive. They were scarcely got back into their own chamber, when the purveyor, who had returned late from a wedding feast, went into his room, with a lantern in his hand. He was not a little surprised to discover a human figure standing in his chimney ; but being a stout fellow, and apprehending him to be a thief, he took up a stick, and, " Ah," said he, " I thought the rats and mice ate my butter and tallow ; but it is you who come down the chimney to rob me ? However, I think you will have no wish to come here again." Upon this he attacked the hunchback, and struck him several times with his stick.

The body fell down flat on the ground, and the purveyor redoubled his blows. But observing that the body did not move, he stood a little time to regard it ; and then, fear succeeding his anger, " Wretched man that I am ! " said he, " what have I done ! I have killed a man ! alas, I have carried my revenge too far."

He stood pale and thunderstruck, and could not tell what resolution to take, when on a sudden he took up the body supposed to be dead, and carried it to the end of the street, where he placed it in an upright posture against a shop ; and then returned without once looking behind him.

A few minutes before daybreak, a wealthy Christian merchant, coming home from a night's festivity, passed by the spot where the Sultan's purveyor had put the dead body, which, being jostled by him, tumbled upon the merchant's back. The merchant, thinking he was attacked by a robber, knocked it down, and after redoubling his blows, cried out, " Thieves ! "

The outcry alarmed the watch, who came up immediately, and finding a Christian beating a Mussulman, " What reason have you," said he, " to abuse a Mussulman in this manner ? "

" He would have robbed me," replied the merchant, " and jumped upon my back in order to take me by the throat."

"If he did," said the watch, "you have revenged yourself sufficiently; come, get off him." At the same time perceiving the little man to be dead, he said: "Is it thus that a Christian dares to assassinate a Mussulman?" So saying, he laid hold of the Christian and carried him to the house of the *cadi*. In the meantime, the Christian merchant, reflecting upon his adventure, could not conceive how such slight blows of his fist could have killed the man.

The judge having heard the report of the watch, and viewed the body, which they had brought to his house, interrogated the Christian merchant, who could not deny the death, though he had not caused it. But the judge, considering that the little dwarf belonged to the Sultan, for he was one of his buffoons, would not put the Christian to death till he knew the Sultan's pleasure. For this end he went to the palace, and acquainted the Sultan with what had happened; and received this answer: "I have no mercy to show to a Christian who kills a Mussulman." Upon this the *cadi* ordered a stake to be prepared, and sent criers all over the city to proclaim that they were about to impale a Christian for killing a Mussulman.

At length the merchant was brought to the place of execution; and the executioner was about to fasten him to the stake, when the Sultan's purveyor pushed through the crowd, calling to him to stop, for that the Christian had not committed the murder, but he himself had done it, and related how he had attacked him, under the impression that he was a thief.

"Let the Christian go," said the *cadi* to the executioner, "and impale this man in his stead, since it appears by his own confession that he is guilty."

Thereupon the executioner released the merchant, and seized the purveyor; but just as he was going to impale him, he heard the voice of the Jewish doctor, earnestly entreating him to suspend the execution, and make room for him to approach, as he was the real criminal, and stating how he had, by his hasty imprudence, caused his death.

The chief-justice, being now persuaded that the Jewish doctor was the murderer, gave orders to the executioner to seize him and release the purveyor. Accordingly the doctor was just going to be impaled, when the tailor appeared crying, in his turn, to the executioner to hold his hand, and make room for him, that he might come and make his confession to the *cadi*, as, after all, he was the person really answerable for the death of the hunchback, and he could not bear that an innocent man should suffer for his crime.

The *cadi* being now fairly perplexed to decide who was the real culprit amongst so many self-accusing criminals, determined to refer the matter to the Sultan himself, and proceeded to the palace, accompanied by the tailor, the Jewish doctor, the Sultan's purveyor,

and the Christian merchant, while four of his men carried on a bier the body of the dwarf, supposed to be dead.

When they appeared in the Sultan's presence, the *cadi* prostrated himself at his feet ; and on rising, gave him a faithful relation of all he knew of the story of the dwarf, and of the men who, one after the other, accused themselves of his involuntary murder. The story appeared so extraordinary to the Sultan that he ordered his own historian to write it down with all its circumstances.

PERSIAN

THE PILGRIM AND THE ROBBERS

A MAN of the name of Shems, with two other inhabitants of Nishapúr, joined a caravan of pilgrims going to Mecca. After journeying some days they entered a desert. One evening, when the sun had covered himself with the mantle of concealment, and the night had begun to display her dusky ringlets, these three men, who had never travelled before and were ignorant of the customs of caravans, felt tired and sleepy ; they lost the reins of endurance from their hands, and agreed to repose for a short time to recover their strength, confident that they should afterwards overtake the caravan. They went to sleep, but were so intoxicated with the goblet of unconsciousness that they did not awake before the night had passed, and the sailor of destiny had again propelled the golden boat of the sūn into the midst of the azure ocean of the firmament. When they awoke they threw their arrows of vision in all directions, and sent the couriers of their glances to the right and left, but were unable to discover any trace of the caravan. They arose under great apprehensions and hastened forward ; but although they did their utmost, they merely retraced their steps to the same place, in spite of themselves, like a boat in an eddy. They despaired of joining the caravan, and being in deadly fear, did not know what plaster would heal the dreadful wound which they had inflicted upon themselves by their carelessness, or by what means they might come out from the well of their misfortune.

The three pilgrims continued to roam through the desert till the afternoon of next day, although they were hungry and thirsty. At last they perceived on the horizon something moving, which put them into still greater fright ; it was an Arab, one of the robbers of the desert, who was sufficiently alert to jump from the lasso of swiftness to the top of the firmament, and to rob the sun and moon of their splendour, and by the twinkling of his eye to separate the meanings from words ; in valour and strength he accounted Rustam (the Persian Hercules) as an old woman compared with himself. He had long stuck to the desert like the disease of cancer, and made

it his employment to deprive of life and property whom he could. As soon as he had reached the three wanderers, he tied them to his horse and dragged them after him till he arrived at a spring of water, where he drew forth his sword and killed two of the men. Then laying his sword on the ground, he proceeded to rifle his victims, and while thus occupied, Shems, who was yet alive, suddenly burst his bonds, snatched up the sword and pierced with it one side of the robber, so that it came out at the other side, and the owl of his accursed soul flew to the ruinous habitation of non-existence. When Shems had thrown this thorn of life out of the way of the bare-footed travellers on that road, he thanked Allah, took from the corpse the money of his companions, and mounted the robber's horse. As he knew not in what direction to proceed, he considered that the horse must needs be able to find some inhabited place, so he threw the reins on its neck, and the steed ran with the velocity of lightning till it reached an encampment, the black tents of which were scattered on the surface of the desert like the moles on the cheeks of Laylá.¹

This was the place where the slain robber dwelt, and from which he used to sally forth. A week had elapsed since he had left, and his tribesmen were astonished at his absence. They all came out to meet him, but soon discovered that it was another man mounted on his horse; so, taking the bridle, they led him into the camp, and small and great commenced to attack him. Shems concluded that the robber he had slain must have belonged to this encampment, and that these were his relations who were abusing him. (The colour of the flower of his life having been blown away from his cheek by the autumnal blast of the tempest of this accident, he reflected that he had escaped from the jaws of the wolf of destruction, but that destiny had again stretched the bow-string of an unfortunate coincidence, and that the breeze of fate had caused a strange flower to bloom, which required a strong arm, so that it would be almost impossible to be saved from this misfortune.) He turned this over in his mind, and considering that all things depend upon prudent management, he thought that to gain time was the first step, so he said to the crowd: "The rosebush of my life is so withered, from travelling on the road of accidents and exhaustion, that the breeze of no power could move it. If you have any food, bring some of it to me, that I may strengthen myself and relate the story of that young man." They brought him victuals, which he ate, and having arranged the arrow of stratagem in the bow of his mind, he thus spoke:

"Know, ye inhabitants of these tents, that I belong to the caravans of the pilgrims, which had stopped at a certain halting-

¹ Laylá and Majnún are the typical lovers of the Mohammedans.

place, when all of a sudden the Rustam-like warrior made his appearance on the verge of the desert. If his flashing scimitar had swept over the firmament, it would have cut it in twain ; and if the whistling sound of his sword coming down with force in battle had reached the ear of the mountain Káf, it would have taken refuge under the wings of the Anka.¹ He attacked the caravan, killed some and wounded others. He was like an eagle falling on a flock of pigeons, or like a spark of fire in a ripe field which grows into a conflagration and burns up everything. As the caravan consisted of ten or twelve thousand men, some of them attacked him, and, after having slain a number of them, he was made prisoner. They purposed extinguishing the lamp of his life with the tempest of enmity ; but the leader of the caravan and some influential men thought it would be a pity to sever the tree of life of so valiant a youth with the saw of annihilation. So they said : ‘ We shall save your life if you pay the price of blood of those whom you have exterminated, and if you swear never in future to commit such a crime,’ and they fixed his ransom at ten thousand dinars. Said the young warrior : ‘ I would give you even more than this sum, but I have not even a hundred dirhams with me. But my friends and family live in a camp not far hence, and there I possess much money and property. If you could get some person to mount my horse, to ride to the encampment, and to explain my condition, you would probably obtain gold and silver far beyond the amount you have named.’ Everybody in his turn was invited to undertake the task, but all refused ; and when the relatives of the slain men saw that they were disappointed in their expectation of blood-ransom, they were ready to put him to death. I was sorry that the granary of life of so brave a man should be trodden down by the foot of destruction, so I rose and said : ‘ It is a good tree which bears only the fruits of expectation of good deeds. I will undertake to carry the message ; but I know neither the road nor the people.’ He answered : ‘ My horse knows the way, and will carry you to the place. Tell my friends to send ten thousand dinars and not to grudge them, for they are the ransom of my life, and such a case is the opportunity to show their love for me.’ ”

When Shems had concluded his oration, the friends of the robber looked at each other in astonishment and said : “ What impossible things do you relate to us ! That young man is tried and experienced in the arts of horsemanship and warfare. He does not engage in a conflict before he is convinced that he will come out of it victorious. And it is extremely improbable that such an accident should have happened to him. However, this is certainly his own

¹ A mythical bird that dwells in Mount Káf and is supposed to bring good fortune to whomsoever it overshadows with its wings.

steed, and there may be some truth in what you have said."

Shems replied: "What I have told you is in conformity with common sense. Do you think that I, who am weak and could in no wise cope with his strength and valour, would have been able to deprive him of his horse? This is not a time for squabbling. You ought to make haste to show him your friendship in delivering him from the relatives of the men he has slain. I have obtained two days' respite, and if I do not return within that time, your kinsman will certainly be put to death and your repentance will come too late. I apprehend you will fare like the watchmen who were overreached by a cunning thief, and that you will gain nothing by scratching the breast of repentance and sorrow."

They asked him: "How was this?" and Shems related the story of the watchmen outwitted by a thief.

On a certain night a thief, who was able to steal the five senses from the body, and himself possessed the senses of all bodies, broke into the house of a rich man and collected many valuables. When he wished to go away and had reached the door of the house, he met a number of watchmen, and considered with what snare he might entangle their feet. Seeing a broom, he commenced to sweep. The watchmen arrived and asked what occasion there was to sweep the house at midnight. The thief answered: "The master of the house died in the evening, and the passage is dirty, and as there will be plenty of other work to do in the morning, I am doing this now."

The watchmen asked: "How is it that we do not hear the voice of lamentation?"

Quoth the thief: "To-morrow morning you will hear the sounds of distress."

Upon this the watchmen went away, and the thief took the articles which he had stolen. When it was morning the master of the house made a great outcry because of the robbery, and when the police heard of it they knew that the man was a thief and had swept the house by way of stratagem; they searched everywhere, but they reaped only the fruits of repentance.

"I have told you this story," continued Shems, "to show you that when the leading-string of an affair falls into our hands we must not regard it lightly, and that it is of no use whatever to gnaw the finger of indecision. The duties of friendship which you owe to your kinsman require that you should now despatch along with me some messengers with the ransom-money."

They agreed to this, and ten men were selected, each of whom carried a thousand dinars and other presents. The caravan being tracked from stage to stage till it was overtaken at a halting-place, Shems said to the Arabs: "Remain for awhile till I go forward and

explain your business." He then advanced and informed the leader of the caravan of his adventure and of the death of his two companions, of the robber's friends, and of the ruse by which he had saved himself from them. The leader of the caravan praised him, and greatly approved of his cunning. Then the robber's friends were summoned and their presents accepted, after which the leader of the caravan explained to them the real facts of the case, and ordered them to be executed on the spot. But many of the pilgrims interceded, saying that the guilty man had fallen into the well of his own crime, and that these not being so blameable had not forfeited their lives. So they were dismissed after pledging themselves to abstain in future from attacking travellers.

PERSIAN

THE KAZI OF EMESSA

THERE lived once, in the same city, a wealthy Jew and a poor Mussulman. The latter fell at length into such distress that he went to the Jew, and begged a loan of a hundred dīnars ; saying that he had a favourable opportunity of trading with the money, and promising half the profits in return for the favour. The Jew, though a great miser, had long cast the eyes of affection on the Mussulman's wife, a woman of extraordinary beauty, but of strict chastity, and fondly attached to her husband. He hoped, however, that if he could involve the poor man in distress, and force her to intercede for him, he might gain his wicked purpose. With this motive, therefore, he spoke kindly, and said, " If you will give the pledge I shall require, you shall have the money without interest." The Mussulman, somewhat astonished at his liberality, asked what pledge he wanted, and the Jew replied : " Consent that, in case you do not pay the money by a given day, I shall cut off a pound of flesh from your body." But the poor man, fearing the dangers and delays which might befall him, refused. In a couple of months, however, being hard pressed by poverty and the hunger of his children, he came back and took the money ; and the Jew had the precaution to call in several respectable men of the Mohammedan faith to witness the terms of their agreement.

So the Mussulman set off on his journey, which was prosperous ; and sent the money in good time to his wife, that she might discharge the debt. But she, not knowing what pledge had been given, and being much perplexed by domestic difficulties, applied the money to her household purposes ; and the penalty of the bond was incurred. It was some time after this that the Mussulman was joyfully returning, with large gains, and in the confident belief that he had escaped from the snares of the Jew, when he fell among thieves, who plundered him of all, and he came home as poor as he went out.

Presently the Jew called and politely asked after his health ; and next day he returned to claim the fulfilment of his bond. The luckless merchant told him his story ; the relentless Jew replied :

"My money or the pledge." And thus they went on for some days in hot contention till the neighbours, interfering, advised them to refer the matter to the Kazi. To the Kazi accordingly they went ; who, after a patient hearing of the case, decreed that the merchant had forfeited his pledge, and must submit to the penalty. But to this he would by no means consent ; protesting against the legality of the decree, and claiming a right of appeal. Upon which the Jew desired him to name the judge with whose decision he would be content ; and he selected the Kazi of Emessa, as a man of profound knowledge and strict justice. The Jew agreed to the appeal, on consideration that both parties should bind themselves to accept his judgment as final ; and this point being settled, they both set out for the city of Emessa.

They had not gone far when they met a runaway mule, with his master in pursuit, who called to them to stop the animal or turn him back ; and the merchant, after several vain efforts, flung a stone at the beast, which knocked out one of its eyes. Upon this the owner came up, and seizing the poor merchant, accused him of blinding his mule, and insisted on the full value. To this, however, the Jew objected, as he had a prior claim ; but he told him that he might come with them if he liked, and hear what the Kazi might have to say in the matter. And so the muleteer joined them, and the three pursued their journey together.

At night they reached a village, and as it was dark, they went quietly to sleep on the flat roof of a house ; but by and by there was an uproar in the village, and the merchant, unable to resist the pleasure of mixing in the tumult, jumped suddenly down from the roof, and fell on a man who was sleeping below and caused his death. The two sons of the deceased laid hands on the unfortunate man, and threatened to kill him in retaliation. But the Jew and the muleteer opposed this design, unless they would first satisfy their demands ; and advised the young men to come along with them, and lay their complaint before the Kazi. To this the heirs of the deceased consented, and the five now travelled together.

Next day they overtook a poor man whose ass had stuck in the mud, and which, with all his efforts, he could not get out. He begged them to help him ; and while the others took hold each of a corner of the load, and he seized the bridle, the unlucky merchant lugged at the tail, which came off in his hands. The peasant was enraged, and said he must pay for the beast, which was now useless ; but the others told him to be quiet, and come along with them, and tell his story to the judge.

Shortly after this they came to Emessa, and were astonished at seeing a venerable man, with a large turban and a robe which came down to his heels, and riding on an ass ; but disgracefully drunk and vomiting. Upon inquiry they learned that he was the censor. A little while after, they reached the mosque, which they found full of people engaged in gambling. And passing on they met a man tossing about on a bier, whom the people were carrying forth to his burial ; and when he protested against the measure, appealing to the bystanders to say whether he was not alive, they assured him that he was certainly dead ; and the poor man was buried.

Next morning they presented themselves before the Kazi, and began all at once to make their complaints ; but the Kazi told them to stop their clamour, and to speak one at a time. So the Jew began : " My lord, this man owes me a hundred dinars, upon the pledge of a pound of flesh ; command him to pay the money or surrender the pledge."

Now it happened that the Kazi and the merchant were old friends ; so when the Kazi asked him what he had to say, he frankly confessed that what the Jew had alleged was all true ; but he was utterly unable to pay the debt : hoping, no doubt, that the contract would be declared null. He was, therefore, astounded at hearing the Kazi declare that if he could not give the money he must pay the penalty ; and when the officers were commanded to prepare a sharp knife for the purpose, he trembled, and gave himself up for lost.

Then the Kazi, addressing the Jew, said : " Arise, take the knife, and cut off the pound of flesh from his body ; but so that there be not a grain more or less. Your just right is one pound exactly ; take either more or less, by ever so little, and I will make you over to the Governor, who will put you to death."

To which the Jew replied : " It is not possible to cut it exactly, but there must needs be a little more or less."

But the Kazi told him it must be a pound exactly, and that any other quantity, being unjustifiable, would involve him in guilt.

The Jew, being frightened at this interpretation of his right, renounced his claim, and said he would forgive the debt altogether.

" Very well," said the Kazi ; " but if you have brought the man so far, on a claim which you cannot maintain, it is but reasonable that you should pay for his time, and the support of his family during his absence."

The matter was then referred to arbitration, and the damages

being assessed at two hundred dīnars, the Jew paid the money and departed.

Next came the muleteer, and told his story ; and the Kazi asked him what the value of the mule was : the man said it was fully worth a thousand dirhams before it lost its eye. " This is a very simple case," said the Kazi. " Take a saw, cut the mule in two ; give him the blind half, for which he must pay you five hundred dirhams, and keep the other side to yourself." To this the man very much objected, because, he said, the mule was still worth 750 dirhams, so he preferred putting up with his loss, and would give up the suit. The Kazi admitted that he was at liberty to do so, but he must make amends to the man for such a frivolous and vexatious suit ; and the poor muleteer kept his blind mule, and had to pay a hundred dīnars in the shape of compensation to the merchant.

The next party were called on to state their grievance ; and the Kazi, on hearing how the man had been killed, asked the sons if they thought the roof of the college was about the height of the house that the merchant jumped from. They said they thought it was. Upon which he decreed that the merchant should go to sleep on the ground, and that they should get upon the roof and jump down on him ; and that as the right of blood belonged to them equally, they must take care to jump both at once. They accordingly went to the roof ; but when they looked below, they felt alarmed at the height, and so came down again, declaring that, if they had ten lives, they could not expect to escape. The Kazi said he could not help that : they had demanded retaliation, and retaliation they should have ; but he could not alter the law to please them. So they too gave up their claim, and with much difficulty got off, upon paying the merchant two hundred dīnars for the trouble they had given him.

Last of all came the owner of the ass, and told the story of the injury which his poor beast had suffered. " What ! another case of retaliation ? " said the Kazi. " Well, fetch my ass, and let the man pull off his tail." The beast was accordingly brought, and the man exerted all his strength to revenge the insult which had been put upon his favourite. But an ass which had carried the Kazi was not likely to put up with such an indignity, and soon testified his resentment by several hearty kicks, which made the man faint. When he recovered, he begged leave to decline any further satisfaction ; but the Kazi said it was a pity he should not have his revenge, and that he might take his own time. But the more he pulled, the harder the vicious creature kicked, till at last the poor man, all bruises and blood, declared that he had accused the merchant falsely, for his own donkey never had a tail. The Kazi protested, however, that it

was contrary to practice to allow a man to deny what he had once alleged, and that he must therefore maintain his suit. Upon which the poor fellow said, he saw how it was ; he supposed he would have to pay as well as the rest ; and he begged to know how much it was. So, after the usual pretences and dissensions, he was let off for a hundred dinars.

When all the plaintiffs had left the court, the Kazi, collecting the different fines which he had imposed upon them, divided the whole amount into two equal shares, one of which he reserved for himself, and the other he gave to the merchant ; but observing that he sat still and seemed very thoughtful, he asked him if he was satisfied.

" Perfectly so, my lord," said he ; " and full of admiration of your wisdom and justice. But I have seen some strange sights since I came to this city, which perplex me ; and I should esteem it a kindness if you would explain them."

The Kazi promised to give him all the satisfaction in his power ; and having learnt what had perplexed him, thus replied :

" The vintners of this city are a very dishonest set of people, who adulterate the wine, mix water with it, or sell it of an inferior quality. So the censor, every now and then, goes round to examine it ; and if he should taste but even so little at each place where it is sold, it will at last get into his head ; and that is why he got so drunk yesterday. The mosque where you saw them gambling has no endowment, and was very much out of repair ; so it has been let for a gaming house, and the profit will serve to put it in order as a place of worship. And as for the man who excited your compassion, I can assure you he was really dead, as I will show you. Two months ago his wife came into court, and pleaded that her husband had died in a distant country, and claimed legal authority for marrying again. I required her to produce evidence of his death ; and she brought forward two credible witnesses, who deposed to the truth of what she had said. I therefore gave decree accordingly, and she was married. But the other day he came before me, complaining that his wife had taken another husband, and requiring an order that she should return to him ; and as I did not know who he was, I summoned the wife before me, and ordered her to account for her conduct. Upon which she said that he was the man whom she had two months ago proved to be dead ; and that she had married another by my authority. I then told the man that his death had been clearly established on evidence which could not be refuted ; that my decree could not be revoked ; and that all the relief I could afford him was to give orders for his funeral."

The merchant expressed his admiration of the Kazi's acuteness

and wisdom, and thanked him for his impartial judgment in his own behalf, as well as for his great condescension in explaining these singular circumstances. He then returned to his own city, where he passed the rest of his days in the frugal enjoyment of the wealth which he had gained at Emessa.

PERSIAN

THE ENVIOUS VIZIER

IN ancient times there lived a king of Africa named Mulukara, who was much honoured by all. Notwithstanding the splendour of the star of his pomp and circumstance, he always kept the lamp of godliness burning near him, associated with pious dervishes, and took lessons from them in the laws of wisdom and experience. In the gates and streets of the city he posted servants, whom he instructed to bring into his presence any dervishes or pious men who came into his kingdom. It was his custom to pass the greater part of the day in dispensing justice to rich and poor, to his soldiers and his subjects, and to pass the remainder of the day in the society of men of knowledge and piety.

Once a Dervish passed through his capital, who had quaffed from the cup of travel by land and sea the liquor of experience and science, and the stature of whose accomplishments was adorned with external and internal perfections. He was introduced to the King, and as he possessed a ready knowledge of the position of every country, and was well acquainted with its customs and manners, the spread-table of his company became so palatable to the King that his Majesty's pleasure increased from day to day to such a degree that his presence at Court became almost indispensable. But as the weeds and rubbish of envy and hatred are always the offspring of the garden of royal consideration and favour, so it was also in this case.

The King had a Vizier who was unique in his kind for envy and covetousness and far removed from the ways and habits of humanity and justice—nay, an entire stranger to them ; so much so, that he wished neither the poor nor the rich, neither the small nor the great, should eat one morsel from the banquet of the King's table ; nor that a thousand ants should be allowed to carry away a single grain of royal bounty and favour. The humane disposition of the King was displeasing to the invidious wretch, and the flame of ill-will of his evil-omened mind having been fanned into a blaze, he ran the charger of his imagination into the hippodrome of stratagems, hurled the dice of falsehood about seeking for an opportunity to throw cold water on the amiable occupations of his Majesty, and

to remove this Dervish from his sight. One day the Vizier found the King alone, and, intending to avail himself of this opportunity, he thus addressed him :

" It is long since your Majesty's humble servant has considered it his highest privilege to enjoy your intimacy, and he has never for a moment acted contrary to the laws of gratitude. But when those who have been so cherished in the royal service, and who observe the duties of fidelity, take notice of events endangering your Majesty's dignity, they feel compelled to bestir themselves in your behalf. Your servant has grave cause to trouble your Majesty at present. Having abandoned the affairs of the kingdom, your Majesty often associates intimately with useless beggars who enjoy no reputation or honour, and who, on account of their evil deeds, have strayed from the regions of felicity and perfection. It is a shame and a disgrace that persons of high descent, of dignity, and of power should soil their pure skirts of prosperity by mixing with the dregs of homeless vagabonds.

"Alas, that a royal pearl should not know its own value
If it fall into jewellers' hands,
Everybody will highly esteem it :
Should it be in a hawker's box,
It will be mistaken for a bead

It is the duty of potentates," added the Vizier, " to regulate the affairs of their armies and subjects, and to keep in order the manufactures which pertain to the maintenance either of peace or of war."

After the King had listened to this, he said : " Do you, who are expert, like Asaf, tell me, then, what neglect there has been in the administration of civil or military affairs, so that we may remedy any defect ; otherwise you have been talking nonsense. Those endowed with knowledge and wisdom, who are sitting on the carpet of good manners, have compared royal personages with rose-gardens, which are frequented by thousands of persons of all grades, and nothing is lost of their freshness or perfume. Thus all creatures are benefited by the rays of the world-illuminating sun, yet its splendour is not diminished. Kings profit in various ways by the society of experienced and travelled men, and become thereby fortified in power. And I have many reasons for associating with such people."

During this conversation the Dervish made his appearance. The King inquired as to his welfare, and the Vizier took his leave, thinking that it was impossible to deprive the Dervish of the King's favour. Nevertheless, he let fly the bird of envy into the space of

intrigues ; he drew the sword of hypocrisy over the whetstone of enmity ; and spanned the bow of malevolence, in hopes that the arrow of falsehood and cunning might strike the target of his desires. One day meeting the Dervish, he began to flatter him, saying :

" O thou pillar of the righteous and quintessence of the diligent, although the breeze of your mind pervades the pleasure-garden of the society of royalty and of those who are powerful, yet do the weak and humble, like myself, hope to attract your attention, because the company of the enlightened bestows happiness upon all hearts.

" The society of the wise confers polish on the mirror of the mind ;
The splendour of the sun lights the lamp of the moon.

Since abundant blessings and infinite advantages result from attending the service of the pious, I venture to hope that any day when your presence at Court is not required you will condescend to illuminate the poor dwelling of your devoted servant with the rays of the torch of your noble presence."

The Dervish was overcome by the flattery and smoothness of the Vizier, and consented. Shortly after this the King, being indisposed, did not quit his harem the whole day. The Dervish remembered the promise he had made to the Vizier, went to visit him, and was received with great apparent friendliness. Evening having set in, and the other guests gone to their respective homes, the Vizier said : " Since the enjoyment of the company of dervishes is one of the indications of prosperity and good luck, and as such happiness does not often fall to our lot, I have been seated long in the lair of expectation, waiting that such a gift might be transferred from the ledger of destiny to the horoscope of my name. I humbly hope that you will, like the full moon, condescend to abide in the mansion of your servant."

The Dervish stayed all night, and in the morning the Vizier said to him : " They have cooked a dish in the house, into which they have put a great deal of garlic," and placing it before the Dervish, continued : " Thou receptacle of sweet converse and chosen vessel of devotion, as it is customary to prepare dishes of this kind each morning during winter-time, I have brought you some of it ; all its ingredients are lawful substances, and no harm will come to you from eating it."

The Dervish gladly accepted the food, but the Vizier excused himself from partaking of it, saying : " To-day is the 14th day of the month of Showal and the King's birthday, and it is my custom to

fast on this day, in conformity with a vow which I made many years ago."

The Dervish ate heartily of the savoury dish, after which the Vizier said : " Although garlic is very palatable and in many respects profitable to health, it is strange that our King greatly dislikes it, and hates every man who smells of it." Presently information was brought that the King had come out of his private apartments ; and the Vizier advised the Dervish to go to the bath in order to remove from his person the smell of garlic, while he proceeded on urgent business to the palace.

When the Vizier made his appearance, the King inquired of him ; " Where is the Dervish ? "

He answered : " Yesterday and to-day the Dervish was in my house ; he proposed going to the bath, and probably is there now."

Said the King : " This Dervish has been in my service for some time, and I have greatly profited by intercourse with him, therefore I feel somewhat ashamed at not having yet given him a worthy present. You know it is in accordance with human nature to have desires and to expect gifts. As I have not hitherto rewarded the Dervish, I wish to know whether you have heard him utter anything like words of complaint about me."

The Vizier stretched out his neck and said, as if in hesitation : " Well." Then the King's curiosity was excited, and he ordered the Vizier to tell him the truth.

The Vizier, having thus found an opportunity, drove the courser of suspicion into the plain of enmity and self-interest, and writing with the pen of laudation on the page of flattery, thus began : " It is not hidden from your exalted Majesty's understanding that troops of such like men are wandering about everywhere, and that with whatever people they may chance to live, they observe their ways and customs as long as they are with them ; but as soon as they leave them they will propagate a thousand erroneous notions about them in the next place where they sojourn. Persons of this kind have no fixed principles or religion ; everywhere is lawful with them. Therefore, to associate with them is against the law of God and the Prophet ; the wise have always shunned such unhallowed companions, and have never placed confidence in them."

The King replied : " Say, at least, what you have heard of the Dervish with reference to me."

Quoth the Vizier : " Since he is well aware that I am a devoted servant of your Majesty, he dare not say aught disparaging of you. He could not, however, altogether control his tongue, but once said that your Majesty had no fault excepting a foul breath,

from which he suffered much whenever he sat near you. When the wretch made such an aspersion I was strongly disposed to reprove him, but refrained, lest I should give occasion to malignant reports."

The King was much astonished at this speech, but suspected that the Vizier was actuated by interested motives.

In the meanwhile the Dervish entered, and as he was conscious that the odour of garlic was still about his person, he seated himself in a much lower place than usual. The Vizier went out, and the King was as friendly to the Dervish as before, albeit the words of the Vizier still weighed on his mind. He called him to approach nearer, when he perceived where he had seated himself, but the Dervish begged his pardon and did not move from his place. Then the King himself arose and went near him; but as the Dervish had heard from the Vizier that the effluvium from garlic was extremely disagreeable to the King, he gradually drew back, and every time he addressed his Majesty he turned his face away from him. When the King perceived this, he said to himself: "Apparently the Vizier is quite right: this is the consequence of showing kindness to a mean fool. I must punish him, and in such a way that nobody shall become aware of it, nor I be accused of being of a changeable disposition and of discarding my favourites, lest any dervishes should in future be shy of my society."

The King had a country house at a distance of two farangs from the city, where he kept several slaves whom he had commanded, whenever it should become necessary to put any person secretly to death, they should behead such as came to them with a letter in his own handwriting, even were they his own children. In this way he caused several criminals to be executed by them, without the knowledge of any but himself and these slaves. Designing to have the Dervish thus despatched, he said to him: "I know you much long to revisit your own country, and as I have not hitherto assisted you, here is an order for a thousand dinars, to defray the expenses of your journey, and you can have the money on presenting it at my country house."

The Dervish took his leave of the King and departed. Meeting the Vizier, he informed him of his dismissal and showed him the bill, at the same time saying he did not know where the King's country house was situated. The Vizier, concluding that if the Dervish did not receive the money he would again return to Court, said: "Friend Dervish, I will give you the money myself, and you can leave the bill with me." So the Dervish handed over the paper, received the money, and went his way. As the Vizier was entirely ignorant of the peculiar arrangement at the King's country house, after a few days she resolved to make a pleasure excursion thither.

He set out, and having found the place, showed the paper to the servants, who immediately surrounded him, drew their swords and cut him to pieces.

“The world is a place of retribution ;
It is like a mirror, it shows you your own image.”

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

1313-1375

STORY OF THE THREE RINGS

SALADIN was so brave and great a man, that he had raised himself, from an inconsiderable station, to be Sultan of Babylon, and had gained many victories over both Turkish and Christian princes. This monarch, having in divers wars, and by many extraordinary expenses, run through all his treasure, some urgent occasion fell out that he wanted a large sum of money. Not knowing which way he might raise enough to answer his necessities, he at last called to mind a rich Jew of Alexandria, named Melchizedeck, who let out money at interest. Him he believed to have wherewithal to serve him ; but then he was so covetous, that he would never do it willingly, and Saladin was loath to force him. But as necessity has no law, after much thinking which way the matter might best be effected, he at last resolved to use force under some colour of reason. He therefore sent for the Jew, received him in a most gracious manner, and making him sit down, thus addressed him :

"Worthy man, I hear from divers persons that thou art very wise and knowing in religious matters ; wherefore I would gladly know from thee which religion thou judgest to be the true one, viz. the Jewish, the Mohammedan, or the Christian ? "

The Jew (truly a wise man) found that Saladin had a mind to trap him, and must gain his point should he exalt any one of the three religions above the others ; after considering, therefore, for a little how best to avoid the snare, his ingenuity at last supplied him with the following answer :

"The question which your Highness has proposed is very curious ; and, that I may give you my sentiments, I must beg leave to tell a short story. I remember often to have heard of a great and rich man, who among his most rare and precious jewels had a ring of exceeding beauty and value. Being proud of possessing a thing of such worth, and desirous that it should continue for ever in his family, he declared, by will, that to whichever of his sons he should

give this ring, him he designed for his heir, and that he should be respected as the head of the family. That son to whom the ring was given, made the same law with respect to his descendants, and the ring passed from one to another in long succession, till it came to a person who had three sons, all virtuous and dutiful to their father, and all equally beloved by him. Now the young men, knowing what depended upon the ring, and ambitious of superiority, began to entreat their father, who was now grown old, every one for himself, that he would give the ring to him. The good man, equally fond of all, was at a loss which to prefer ; and, as he had promised all, and wished to satisfy all, he privately got an artist to make two other rings, which were so like the first, that he himself scarcely knew the true one. When he found his end approaching, he secretly gave one ring to each of his sons ; and they, after his death, all claimed the honour and estate, each disputing with his brothers, and producing his ring ; and the rings were found so much alike, that the true one could not be distinguished. To law then they went, as to which should succeed, nor is that question yet decided. And thus it has happened, my Lord, with regard to the three laws given by God the Father, concerning which you proposed your question ; every one believes he is the true heir of God, has his laws, and obeys his commandments ; but which is in the right is uncertain, in like manner as with the rings."

Saladin perceived that the Jew had very cleverly escaped the net which was spread for him : he therefore resolved to discover his necessity to him, and see if he would lend him money, telling him at the same time what he had designed to do, had not that discreet answer prevented him. The Jew freely supplied the monarch with what he wanted ; and Saladin afterwards paid him back in full, made him large presents, besides maintaining him nobly at his court, and was his friend as long as he lived.

BOCCACCIO

GILLETTE OF NARBONNE

THERE lived in France a gentleman named Isnard, Count de Roussillon, who, because he was in a bad state of health, always kept a physician in his house, called Master Gerard de Narbonne. Now the Count had an only son, whose name was Bertram, a fine youth, who had been brought up along with other children of his own age, amongst whom was a daughter to this physician, called Gillette, who had for him an infinite esteem and love, more than is common for one at such an age. His father's death, and his being left to the King's care, obliged him to go to Paris, which gave her the utmost concern. Shortly afterwards, her own father dying also, she would gladly, if she could have found a fit pretence, have gone thither to see Bertram; but such care was taken of her, because she was an heiress, that it was impossible. Being now of an age to marry, and being unable to forget her first love, though she had many suitors, on one of whom her guardians would willingly have bestowed her, she rejected them all, without assigning any reason.

In the meantime, her love growing more violent every day, being fed by the admirable reports she heard of Bertram, news was brought that the King of France had a dangerous ailment, which succeeded an ill-cured swelling in his breast, and gave him extreme anguish; nor could he meet with a physician, though he had tried many, who was able to heal it; on the contrary, they had made it worse, insomuch that he was determined to have no more advice. This was agreeable enough to the young lady, not only as it afforded a pretence for her going to Paris, but also as she had great hopes, if the disorder proved of the kind suspected, of getting Bertram for her husband. So, mixing up such drugs as her father was wont to use in cases of that nature, she hastened away to Paris.

The first thing she did, after she had obtained a sight of Bertram, was to wait upon the King, and desire he would acquaint her with his malady. His Majesty most graciously condescended to grant her request; when she was instantly convinced she was able to make a cure, and said, "Sir, if you will give me leave, I hope, without any pain or trouble, to restore your health in eight days."

The King could not help making a jest of this, saying to himself,

"What! shall a woman undertake to do that which has baffled all the best physicians in the world?" He thanked her, therefore, for her good intention, and told her that he was resolved to try no more medicines.

"Sir," replied the lady, "you ridicule my art because I am young, and a woman; but I must remind you that I do not pretend to this from my own knowledge; but I rely upon the help of God, and the judgment of Master Gerard de Narbonne, who was a most eminent physician in his time, and my father."

The King, hearing this, said to himself, "Perhaps she is sent from God to my assistance; why should I not, therefore, make trial of her, as she promises to cure me, without any trouble, in so short a time?" Then, turning to her, "But suppose you should prove mistaken, what would you forfeit for making us break our resolution?"

She replied, "If your Majesty pleases, you may set a guard upon me; and if you are not cured in eight days, then burn me alive: but if I succeed, and you get well, what reward am I then to have?"

"You are a maiden, it appears," said the King: "we will dispose of you in marriage to a person of great account."

"Sir," quoth she, "I accept your offer of a husband, but I will name the person, excepting all of your royal house."

He immediately promised, and she began to administer her medicines; and before the limited time she had wrought a thorough cure. The King then said, "Fair maid, you have well earned a husband."

"Then, sir," she replied, "I have gained the Count de Roussillon, whom I have loved ever since I was a child."

The King thought her demand very great, but, as he had given his word, he would not depart from it. He sent for the Count, therefore, and said to him, "Bertram, you are now of age to take upon you the government of your own country; it is our will that you return thither, and take a wife whom we shall recommend to you."

"And who is the lady, my liege?" replied Bertram.

"It is she," said the King, "who has cured us with her medicines."

Bertram knew and liked her well enough, only that he thought her birth too low for his quality; so he said, with some disdain, "And does your Majesty then mean to give me a doctress for my wife? Surely I may do much better for myself."

"Then," quoth the King, "would you have us be worse than our word? She requested to have you, and we promised, upon condition that we were made well."

"My liege," replied Bertram, "you may take away what I now

possess, or you may add to it if you please ; but this I assure your Majesty, that I will never consent to such a match."

"It is our pleasure to have it so," continued the King ; "she is a prudent and beautiful lady, and you may be happier with her than if you were married to one of greater quality."

Bertram then held his peace ; and the King ordered a magnificent entertainment in honour of the nuptials, and, when the day came, Bertram espoused Gillette, much against his will, in the King's presence, which being done, he took his leave of his Majesty, as if he were going to keep his wedding in his own country ; but, instead of that, he went a quite different way, and came to Tuscany. Finding that the Florentines were at war with the Sienese, he willingly joined them, and, having a command given him, he continued some time in their service.

The bride, not at all pleased with his behaviour, went to Rousillon, in hope of gaining his affections by her prudent management, and was received by his people as their lady and mistress. Finding everything in disorder, on account of her husband's long minority, she used such care and diligence in restoring all to its wonted tranquillity, that she gained the favour and good-will of her subjects, who blamed the Count highly for his neglect of her. When that was done, she sent two knights to him, desiring to know if it was on her account he stayed away from home ; and bidding them tell him that she was willing to go elsewhere to please him. But he answered roughly, that she might use her pleasure ; "For," said he, "I will go to her only when she shall have this ring upon her finger, and a son, begotten by me, in her arms." Now he valued the ring at a high rate, and never parted with it from his finger, because of some secret virtue which he supposed it to have. The knights looked upon the condition as implying two impossibilities ; and, perceiving that he was not to be moved from his resolution, they returned, and reported his answer.

The lady was much afflicted at this, and began to consider, if there were no way to effect these two points, and consequently regain her husband. Taking her measures then accordingly, she assembled all the principal people of the country, when she recounted to them, in a most tender and affectionate manner, all that she had done for the love of the Count, and what ensued thereupon ; and she let them know that it never was her intention, by staying amongst them, to keep him in perpetual banishment : therefore was she resolved to spend the remainder of her life in pilgrimage, for the good of her soul ; and her desire was, that they would take the government upon them, and inform the Count that she had quitted possession, and left the country with a design never more to return. As she was speaking these words, they all began to weep, and they

entreated her much to change her resolution, but to no purpose. Taking her leave, then, and being attended only by a maid-servant and a relation, they set forward together like pilgrims, having provided themselves well with money and jewels ; and, without anybody's knowing whither they were gone, they made no stop till they came to Florence. There, by chance, they met with an inn that was kept by a widow, where she stayed, with a desire of learning some news concerning her lord.

The next day it happened that he passed by the house on horse-back, along with his troops, when, though she knew him very well, yet she asked the landlady who he was ? " It is a gentleman, a stranger," answered she, " one of the best-natured men in the world, and much respected in this country, who is in love with a gentlewoman of small fortune in this neighbourhood : she bears a good character, but is yet unmarried, on account of her scanty circumstances, and lives with her mother."

The Countess, upon hearing this, began to consider more fully what she should do. Having learned the young lady's name, and where she lived, she went one day to the house, and, after the usual salutation, told the mother that she had a mind to speak to her : the other rose, and said with all her heart. They then went into a chamber by themselves, and, sitting down together, the Countess began in this manner : " Madam, you seem to be as little obliged to fortune as myself ; but perhaps it is now in your power to do us both a kindness."

The other replied, that she should be very willing, if it could be done honestly.

The Countess rejoined, " I put myself entirely into your hands ; if you deceive me, you frustrate the purposes of both."

" Speak out," said the lady ; " you shall find I never will deceive you."

The Countess then related her whole story, from beginning to end, part of which the old lady had heard from common report, and she added, " You now hear the two things which I am to compass to gain my husband, with regard to which there is no person in the world can serve me besides yourself, if it be true, as I am told, that he is violently in love with your daughter."

" Madam," quoth the lady, " there is some appearance of the Count's liking my daughter ; but whether there be anything real, that I cannot pretend to say. But what has this to do with your affair ? "

" That," answered she, " I shall soon tell you. But you must first hear what I intended to do in consideration of this service of yours. I understand that you have a daughter, of age to marry, whom you are forced to keep at home with you, for want of a

fortune to give her : now my design is, to advance such a sum of money as you yourself shall think sufficient to marry her reputably."

The lady liked the offer very well, but yet, having the spirit of a gentlewoman, she replied, " Tell me what you want to have done, and if it appear fair and honest, I will do it most willingly, and leave the reward to you."

The Countess then said, " You must give the Count to understand, by some person whom you can trust, that your daughter is ready to oblige him, as soon as she can be assured that he has that real love for her which he pretends, and which she knows not how to credit, unless he sends her the ring that he usually wears, and which, she hears, he sets such a value upon. This ring you must give to me, and then you may let him know that your daughter is at his service, and that he may come privately hither as soon as he pleases, when you must put me to bed to him instead of your daughter. Perhaps, by God's grace, I may prove with child ; so that, by having his ring on my finger, and a son of his in my arms, which were the two conditions required, I may live with him afterwards as my husband, and you be the happy instrument of it."

The lady hesitated at first, fearing some scandal might befall her daughter ; but considering afterwards how fit it was that the good lady should have her husband, she not only promised her assistance, but in a few days obtained the ring, much against the Count's will, and afterwards put the lady to bed to him, instead of her daughter. Accordingly it happened that she became with child of two sons, as the event made manifest. Nor was it once only that the lady afforded the Countess the enjoyment of her husband's embraces, but many times, taking her measures so secretly that the Count never knew a word of it, but always thought he was with his mistress, not with his wife.

At last, when the Countess found herself pregnant, not wishing to give the lady more trouble, she said to her, " Madam, my end is now answered ; I have nothing more to do but to satisfy you for your trouble."

She replied, " If you are contented, it is well ; I did it out of no expectation of reward, but only as it appeared to me quite a right thing."

" Madam," continued the Countess, " I am entirely pleased, and I intend to make you a recompense suitable to your great merit." She then, moved by her necessity, desired, but with the utmost modesty, a hundred pounds for her daughter's portion ; whilst the other, knowing her great worth, and hearing her humble demand, gave her five hundred, and jewels to the amount of as much more, for which she was very thankful ; and, to take away all pretence of the Count's coming any more to her house, the lady removed with

her daughter to her friends in the country.

After some time, Bertram, hearing that his Countess had departed out of his territories, went thither, at the request of his subjects, whilst she stayed at Florence till her time of labour came, when she was brought to bed of two sons, very like their father. She took care to have them well nursed, and, in due time, without being discovered by any person, she came to Montpelier, where she made some stay to rest herself, and to make inquiry concerning her husband. Hearing, at last, that he was to make a great feast at Roussillon, on the day of All Saints, she went thither in the same pilgrim's dress as she first set out in ; and, just as the guests were going to sit down at table, she pressed forwards, through the midst of the crowd of gentlemen and ladies, with her two children in her arms, till, coming where the Count was, she threw herself at his feet, saying, with tears :

" My lord, I am your unhappy wife, who have undertaken a long pilgrimage in order that you might return to your own house. I conjure you, in the presence of God, that you abide by the two conditions enjoined me by the two knights whom I sent to you. Behold, not one son only of yours in my arms, but two ; and, see, here is the ring."

The Count was confounded with admiration, recognising the ring, and the children too, they were so like him, and said : " How can this have happened ? "

The Countess then related the whole story before all the company ; whilst he, knowing her to speak the truth, perceiving also her constancy and good management, and beholding two such pretty children, was moved to fulfil his promise, as well as to oblige the whole company, who requested him to take her as his wife : upon all these considerations, I say, he laid his inveterate hatred aside, raised her up, and saluted her, acknowledging her for his lawful Countess and the two babies for his children : he ordered also suitable apparel to be brought for them, to the great joy of the whole court ; whilst the feasting continued not that day only, but many others : and from that time he showed her all due respect, and they continued happy together as long as they lived.

BOCCACCIO

TANCREDO, PRINCE OF SALERNO

TANCREDO, Prince of Salerno, was a most humane and generous lord, had he not in his old age defiled his hands in a lover's blood. Through the whole course of his life he had only one daughter ; and happy had he been not to have possessed her. No child could be more dear to a parent than she was, and so loath was he to part with her, that she had been many years of marriageable age before he could bring himself to bestow her on a son of the Duke of Capoa. But she was soon left a widow, and came home again to her father. She was a lady of great beauty and understanding, and continuing thus in the court of her father, who took no care to marry her again, and it seeming not so modest in her to ask it, she resolved at last to have a lover privately. Accordingly she made choice of a person of low parentage, but noble qualities, whose name was Guiscard, with whom she became violently in love, as he did with her. Such being their secret feelings, the lady who desired nothing so much as to be with Guiscard, and did not dare to trust any person with the affair, contrived a new stratagem in order to apprise him of the means. She wrote a letter, wherein she mentioned what she would have him do the next day for her ; this she put into a hollow cane, and giving it to him one day, she said, pleasantly, " You may make a pair of bellows of this, for your servant to blow the fire with this evening."

He took the cane, supposing very justly that she had some covert meaning, and, opening it at home he found the letter, which filled him with the utmost joy ; and he immediately took measures to meet her in the manner she had directed him.

On one side of the palace, and under a mountain, was a grotto, which had been made time out of mind, and into which no light could come but through a little opening dug in the mountain, and which, as the grotto had been long in disuse, was grown over with briars and thorns. Into this grotto was a passage, by a private staircase, out of one of the rooms of the palace, which belonged to the lady's apartment and was secured by a very strong door. This passage was so far out of every one's thoughts, having been disused

for so long a time, that nobody remembered anything about it : but love, whose notice nothing can escape, brought it fresh into the mind of the enamoured lady. To keep this thing entirely private she laboured all alone some days before she could get the door open ; when, having gone down into the cave, and observed the opening, and how high it might be from the bottom, she acquainted Guiscard with these details. He then provided a ladder of cords ; and casing himself well with leather, to defend him from the thorns, he fixed one end of the ladder to the stump of a tree which was near, and slid down by the help of it to the bottom, where he stayed, expecting the lady.

The following day, therefore, having sent her maids out of the way, under pretence that she was going to lie down, and locking herself up alone in her chamber, she opened the door and descended into the grotto, where she met her paramour to their intense mutual satisfaction. Thence she showed him the way to her chamber, where they were together the greatest part of the day, and, after they had taken proper measures for the time to come, he went away through the cave, and she returned to her maids. He did the same the next night ; and he followed this course for a considerable time, till fortune, as if she envied them their happiness, thought fit to change their mirth into mourning.

Tancred used sometimes to come into his daughter's chamber, to pass away a little time with her. Going thither, quite unperceived, one day after dinner, whilst Ghismond (this was the lady's name) was with her maids in the garden ; and, not yet wishing to take her from her diversion, finding also the windows shut, and the curtains drawn to the feet of the bed, he threw himself down in a great chair, which stood in a corner of the room, leaned his head upon the bed, drew the curtain before him, as if he concealed himself on purpose, and fell asleep.

In the meantime, Ghismond, having made an appointment with her lover, left the maids in the garden, and came into her chamber, which she secured, not thinking of any person being there. Then she went to meet Guiscard, who was in the cave waiting for her, and brought him into her chamber ; when her father awoke, and was a witness to all that passed between them. This was the utmost affliction to him, and he was about to cry out, but upon second thoughts he resolved to keep the matter private if possible, that he might be able to do more securely, and with less disgrace, what he had resolved upon. The lovers stayed together their usual time, without perceiving anything of Tancred, who, after they were departed, got out of the window into the garden, old as he was, and went, without being seen by any one, very sorrowful to his chamber.

The next night, according to his orders, Guiscard was seized by

two men as he was coming out of the cave, and carried by them in his leathern doublet to Tancred, who, as soon as he saw him, said, with tears in his eyes, "Guiscard, you have ill requited my kindness towards you, by this outrage and shame which you have brought upon me, and of which this very day I have been an eye-witness."

Guiscard made no other answer but this: "Sir, love has greater power than either you or I."

Tancred then ordered that he should be kept in secret custody.

The next day he went to his daughter's apartment as usual (she knowing nothing of what had happened), and, after locking the door, said to her, weeping, "Daughter, I had such an opinion of your modesty and virtue, that I could never have believed, had I not seen it with my own eyes, that you would have violated either, even so much as in thought. The recollection of this will make the pittance of life that is left very grievous to me. As you were determined to act in that manner, would to Heaven you had made choice of a person more suitable to your own quality; but this Guiscard is one of the very meanest persons about my court. This gives me such concern, that I scarcely know what to do. As for him, he was secured by my order last night, and his fate is determined. But with regard to yourself, I am influenced by two different motives: on one side, the tenderest regard that a father can have for a child; and on the other, the justest vengeance for the great folly you have committed. One pleads strongly in your behalf; and the other would excite me to do an act contrary to my nature. But, before I come to a resolution, I would hear what you have to say for yourself."

And when he said this, he hung down his head, and wept like a child.

She, hearing this from her father, and perceiving that their amour was not only discovered, but her lover in prison, with difficulty refrained from breaking out into loud and grievous lamentations, as is the way of women in distress; but she conquered this weakness, and putting on a settled countenance, resolved firmly in her own mind not to outlive her Guiscard, who she supposed was already dead. With the utmost composure, therefore, she spoke to this effect:

"Father, it is not my purpose either to deny or to entreat; for as the one can avail me nothing, so I intend the other shall be of little service. I will by no means bespeak your love and tenderness towards me; but shall first, by an open confession, endeavour to vindicate myself, and then do what the greatness of my soul prompts me to. It is most true that I have loved, and do still love, Guiscard; and whilst I live, which will not be long, shall continue to love him;

and, if such a thing as love be after death, I shall never cease to love him. To this I was induced, not so much by female frailty, as by his superior worth, and the little care you took to marry me again. It ought to have been plain to you that, as you are made of flesh and blood, your daughter was not stone or iron, and you should have remembered, though now you are old, what is the nature and force of youthful passions ; and as your best years have been spent in part in the toils of wars, you should the better have known what are the effects of ease and indulgence, not alone on the young, but even on the old. I am then a creature of flesh and blood ; I am still young ; and for both reasons possessed with desires which have become the more intense because having been married I have known the pleasure derived from gratifying them. Unable, then, to resist their force, I determined to obey their impulse ; and, with all the power of my soul, I resolved, that so far as in me lay, no shame should befall you or me from that to which a natural weakness impelled me. In this I was favoured by Love and Fortune, who showed me a very secret way by which, unperceived by any one, I attained my wishes ; and this, whoever disclosed it to you, or however you came to know it, I do not deny. I did not take up with Guiscard by accident, as many do, but I chose him deliberately before all others, admitted him to my chamber with settled forethought, and with resolute perseverance on his part and mine, I long enjoyed my desires. It appears from what you say, that you would have been less incensed if I had made choice of a nobleman, and you bitterly reproach me for having condescended to a man of low condition. In this you speak according to vulgar prejudice, and not according to truth ; nor do you perceive that the fault you blame is not mine, but fortune's, who often exalts the unworthy, and leaves the worthiest in low estate. But, not to dwell on such considerations, look a little into first principles, and you will see that we are all formed of the same materials, and by the same hand. The first difference amongst mankind, who are all born equal, was made by virtue ; they who were virtuous were deemed noble, and the rest were all accounted otherwise. Though this law, therefore, may have been obscured by contrary custom, yet is it discarded neither by nature nor good manners. If then you regard only the worth and virtue of your courtiers, and consider that of Guiscard, you will find him the only noble person, and the others a set of poltroons. With regard to his worth and valour, I appeal to yourself. Who ever commended man more for every thing that was praiseworthy than you have commended ? and deservedly, in my judgment ; but if I was deceived, it was by following your opinion. If you say, then, that I have had an affair with a person base and ignoble, I deny it ; if with a poor one, it is to your shame to let such

merit go unrewarded. Now, concerning your last doubt, namely, how you are to deal with me ; use your pleasure. If you are disposed to commit an act of cruelty, I shall say nothing to prevent such a resolution. But this I must apprise you of, that unless you do the same to me, which you either have done, or mean to do to Guiscard, my own hands shall do it for you. Leave tears then to women ; and if you mean to act with severity, cut us off both together, if it appear to you that we have deserved it."

The Prince knew full well the greatness of his daughter's soul ; yet he could by no means persuade himself, that she would have resolution enough to do what her words seemed to threaten. Dismissing, then, all thoughts of doing her hurt in person, and intending to wear her affection from her lover by taking him off, he gave orders to the two men, who guarded Guiscard, to strangle him privately in the night, and to take his heart out of his body, and bring it to him. They executed his commands, and the next day Tancred called for a golden cup, and putting the heart into it, he had it conveyed by a trusted servant to his daughter, with this message : " Your father sends this present to comfort you with what was most dear to you ; even as he was comforted by you in what was most dear to him."

She had remained unshaken in her resolution since her father left her, and therefore had prepared the juices of some poisonous plants, which she had mixed with water, to be at hand if what she feared should come to pass. When the servant had delivered the present and the message, she took the cup, without changing countenance, and seeing the heart therein, and knowing by the servant's words that it must be Guiscard's, she looked steadfastly at the man, and said, " My father hath done very wisely ; such a heart as this requires no worse a sepulchre than one of gold."

Then she lifted it to her mouth and kissed it, saying : " All my life long, even to this last period of it, have I found my father's love most abundant towards me ; but now more than ever : therefore return him in my name the last thanks that I shall ever be able to give him for such a present." Looking then towards the cup, which she held fast in her hand, she said : " Alas ! dearest end and centre of all my wishes ! Cursed be the cruelty of him, by whom these eyes now see you ; although my soul hath long viewed and known you. You have finished your course ; such a one indeed as fortune has thought fit to allot you ; you are arrived at the goal to which we all tend ; you have left the miseries of this world far behind, and have obtained such a sepulchre from your very enemy as your merit required. Nothing remained to make your obsequies complete but the tears of her who was so dear to you whilst you were living ; and which, that you should not now want, Heaven put it into the mind of my relentless father to send you to me. And you

shall have them, though I had purposed to die unmoved and without shedding a tear; and when I have done, I will instantly join my soul to yours; for in what other company can I go better and safer to those unknown regions, where, I doubt not, your soul is now expecting mine?"

When she had done speaking, she shed a flood of tears, kissing the heart a thousand times; whilst the damsels who were about her knew neither what heart it was, nor what her words imported; but being moved with pity they joined with her, begging to know the cause of her grief, and endeavouring all they could to comfort her.

After she had lamented as long as she thought fit, she raised up her head, and wiping her eyes, said, "Thou heart most dearly beloved! All my duty is now performed towards thee; nothing more remains, but for my soul to accompany thine."

Upon this she bade them reach the vessel of water, which she had prepared the day before, and pouring it into the cup with the heart, which she had sufficiently washed with her tears, she drank it all off without the least dread or apprehension, and threw herself upon the bed with the cup in her hand; composing her body as decently as she could, and pressing her lover's heart to hers, she lay without uttering a word more, expecting death.

The maids, when they saw this, though they knew not what it was she had drunk, sent to acquaint Tancred, who, fearing what had really happened, came into the room soon after she had laid herself down, and finding it was too late, began to lament most grievously.

"Sir," she said to him, "save those tears against worse fortune that may happen, for I want them not. Who but yourself would mourn for a thing of your own doing? But if any part of that love now remain in you which you once had for me, the last request I shall make is that since you would not suffer us to be happy together whilst living, our two bodies (wherever you have disposed of his) may be publicly interred together when dead."

Extreme grief would not suffer the Prince to reply.

Presently, finding herself near her end, she strained the heart strongly to her breast, saying, "Receive us, Heaven, I die!" Then closing her eyes, all sense forsook her, and she departed this miserable life.

Such an end had the amours of Guiscard and Ghismond, as you have now heard; and the Prince, repenting of his cruelty when it was too late, had them buried in one grave in the most public manner, amid the general grief of all the people of Salerno.

BOCCACCIO

CYMON AND IPHIGENIA

ACCORDING to the ancient histories of Cyprus, there lived sometime in that island, one of great rank and distinction, called Aristippus, who was the wealthiest person in all the country. If he was unhappy in any one respect, it was in having, amongst his other children, a son, who, though he exceeded most young people of his age in stature and comeliness, yet was a perfect idiot ; his name was Galeso, but as neither the labour nor skill of his master nor the correction of his father was ever able to beat one letter into his head, or the least instruction of any kind, and as his voice and manner of speaking were strangely harsh and uncouth, he was, by way of disdain, called only Cymon ; which, in their language, signified *beast*. The father had long beheld him with infinite vexation, and as all hopes were vanished concerning him, to remove out of his sight an object which afforded constant matter of grief, he ordered him away to his country-house, to be there with his slaves.

This was extremely agreeable to Cymon, because people of that sort had always been most to his mind. Residing there and doing all sorts of drudgery pertaining to that kind of life, it happened one day, as he was going, about noon-tide, with his staff upon his shoulder, from one farm to another, that he passed through a pleasant grove, which, as it was then the month of May, was all in bloom. Thence, as his stars led him, he came into a meadow surrounded with high trees, in one corner of which was a crystal spring, and by the side of it, upon the grass, lay a most beautiful damsel asleep, clothed with a mantle so exceedingly fine and delicate as scarcely to conceal the exquisite whiteness of her skin ; only from her waist downwards she wore a white silken quilt, and at her feet were sleeping two women and a man-servant.

As soon as Cymon cast his eyes upon her, he stood leaning upon his staff, as if he had never seen the face of a woman before, and began to gaze with the utmost astonishment without speaking a word. Presently, in his rude uncivilised breast, which had hitherto been incapable of receiving the least sense of good-breeding whatever, a sudden thought arose, which seemed to intimate to his gross and shallow understanding that this was the most agreeable sight

that ever was seen. Starting from that fixed point, he began to examine each part by itself, commending every limb and feature ; and having now from being a mere idiot become a judge of beauty, he grew very desirous of seeing the fair sleeper's eyes, for which purpose he was going several times to wake her ; but as she so far excelled all other women that he ever saw, he was in doubt whether she was a mortal creature. This made him wait to see if she would awake of her own accord ; and though that expectation seemed tedious to him, yet so pleasing was the object that he had no power to leave it. After a long time she came to herself, and raising up her head, saw Cymon stand propped upon his stick before her, at which she was surprised, and said, " Cymon " (for he was known all over the country, as well for his own rusticity as his father's nobility and great wealth), " what are you looking for here at this time of day ? "

He made no answer, but stood with his eyes fixed upon hers, which seemed to dart a sweetness that filled him with a kind of joy to which he had hitherto been a stranger ; whilst she, observing this, and not knowing to what his rudeness might prompt him, called up her women, and then said, " Cymon, go about your business."

He replied, " I will go along with you."

And though she was afraid, and would have avoided his company, yet he would not leave her till he had brought her to her own house ; thence he went home to his father, and he declared that he would return no more into the country. This was very disagreeable to all his friends, yet they let him alone, waiting to see what this change of temper could be owing to.

Love having thus penetrated his heart, where no lesson of any kind could ever find admittance, in a little time his way of thinking and behaviour were so far changed that his father and friends were strangely surprised at it, as well as everybody that knew him. First of all then, he asked his father to let him have clothes and everything else like his brothers ; to which the father very willingly consented. Conversing, too, with young gentlemen of character, and observing their ways and manner of behaving, in a very short time he not only got over the first rudiments of learning, but attained to some knowledge in philosophy. Afterwards (his love for Iphigenia being the sole cause) his rude and rustic speech was changed into a tone more agreeable and civilised ; he grew also a master of music : and with regard to the military art, as well by sea as land, he became as expert and gallant as the best. In short, not to run over all his excellences, before the expiration of the fourth year from his being first in love, he turned out the most accomplished young gentleman in every respect that ever Cyprus could boast of. What, then, most gracious ladies, shall we say of Cymon ? Surely nothing less than this ; that all the noble qualities, which had been infused

by Heaven into his generous soul, were shut up as it were by invidious fortune, and bound fast with the strongest fetters in a small corner of his heart, till love broke the enchantment, and drove with all its might these virtues out of that cruel obscurity, to which they had been long doomed, to a clear and open day ; plainly showing whence it draws those spirits that are its votaries, and whither its mighty influence conducts them.

Cymon might have his flights like other young people, with regard to his love for Iphigenia ; yet, when Aristippus considered it was that which had made a man of him, he not only bore with it, but encouraged him in the pursuit of his pleasures. Cymon, nevertheless, who refused to be called Galeso, remembering that Iphigenia had styled him Cymon, being desirous of bringing that affair to a happy conclusion, had often requested her in marriage of her father, who replied that he had already promised her to one Pasimunda, a young nobleman of Rhodes, and that he intended not to break his word. The time then being come that was appointed for their nuptials, and the husband having sent in form to demand her, Cymon said to himself :

“ O Iphigenia, the time is now come when I shall give proof how I love you ! I am become a man on your account ; and could I but obtain you, I should be as glorious and happy as the gods themselves ; and have you I will, or else I will die.”

Immediately he prevailed upon some young noblemen who were his friends, to assist him ; and, fitting out a ship of war privately, they put to sea, in order to intercept the vessel that was to transport Iphigenia ; who, after great respect and honour showed by her father to her husband's friends, embarked with them for Rhodes. Cymon, who had but little rest that night, overtook them on the following day, when he called out, “ Stop, and strike your sails ; or expect to go at once to the bottom of the sea.”

They, on the other hand, had got all their arms on deck, and were prepared to make a vigorous defence. He therefore threw a grappling iron upon the other ship, which was making the best of its way, and drew it close to his own ; when, like a lion, without waiting for any one to second him, he jumped singly among his enemies, as if he cared not for them ; and love spurring him on with incredible force, he cut and drove them all like so many sheep before him, till they soon threw down their arms acknowledging themselves his prisoners ; when he addressed them in the following manner :

“ Gentlemen, it was not a desire of plunder, nor enmity to any of your company, that made me leave Cyprus to fall upon you here in this manner. What occasioned it is a matter, the success of which is of the utmost consequence to myself, and as easy for you to grant me quietly : it is Iphigenia, whom I love above all the world ;

and as I could not have her from her father peaceably, and as a friend, my love constrains me to win her from you as an enemy by force of arms. Therefore I am resolved to be to her what your Pasimunda was to have been. Resign her then to me, and go away in God's name."

The people, more by force than any good will, gave her up, all in tears, to Cymon: who, seeing her lament in that manner, said, "Fair lady, be not discouraged; I am your Cymon, who has a much better claim to your affection, on account of his long and constant love, than Pasimunda can have by virtue of a promise." Taking her then on board his ship, without meddling with anything that belonged to them, he suffered them to depart.

Cymon thus being the most overjoyed man that could be, after comforting the lady under her calamity, consulted with his friends what to do, who were of opinion that they should by no means return to Cyprus yet; but that it were better to go directly to Crete where they all had relations and friends, but Cymon especially, on which account he might be more secure there along with Iphigenia; and accordingly they directed their course that way.

But fortune, who had given the lady to Cymon by an easy conquest soon changed his immoderate joy into most sad and bitter lamentation. In about four hours from his parting with the Rhodians, night came upon them, which was more welcome to Cymon than any of the rest, and with it a most violent tempest, which overspread the face of the heavens in such a manner that they could neither see what they did, nor whither they were carried; nor were they able at all to steer the ship. You may easily suppose what was Cymon's grief on this occasion. He concluded that Heaven had crowned his desires only to make death more grievous to him, which before would have been but little regarded. His friends also were greatly affected, but especially Iphigenia, who trembled at every shock, still sharply upbraiding his ill-timed love, and declaring that this tempest was sent by Providence for no other reason than to disappoint his presumption in resolving to have her, contrary to the will and disposal of Heaven, and that, seeing her die first, he might die likewise in the same miserable manner. Amongst such complaints as these, they were carried at last, the wind growing continually more violent, near the island of Rhodes; and not knowing where they were, they endeavoured, for the safety of their lives, to get to land if possible.

In this they succeeded, and got into a little bay, where the Rhodian ship had arrived just before them; nor did they know they were at Rhodes till the next morning, when they saw, about a bow-shot from them, the same ship they had parted with the day before. Cymon was greatly concerned at this, and fearing what

afterwards came to pass, he bade them put to sea if possible, and trust to fortune, for they could never be in a worse place. They used all possible means then to get out, but in vain ; the wind was strongly against them, and drove them to shore in spite of all they could do to prevent it. They were soon known by the sailors of the other ship, who had now gained the shore, and who ran to a neighbouring town, to which the young gentlemen that had been on board the ship were just gone before, and informed them how Cymon and Iphigenia were like themselves, driven thither by stress of weather. They, hearing this, brought a great number of people from the town to the sea-side, and captured Cymon and all his companions, who had got on shore, with a design of fleeing to a neighbouring wood, as also Iphigenia, and brought them all together to the town.

Pasimunda, upon hearing the news, went and made his complaints to the senate, who, accordingly, sent Lysimachus, the chief magistrate of that year, along with a guard of soldiers, to conduct them to prison. Thus the miserable and enamoured Cymon lost his mistress soon after he had gained her, and without having scarcely so much as a kiss for his pains.

In the meantime Iphigenia was handsomely received by many ladies of quality, and comforted for the trouble she had sustained in being made a captive, as well as in the storm at sea ; and she remained with them till the day appointed for her nuptials. However, Cymon and his friends had their lives granted them (though Pasimunda used all his endeavours to the contrary) for the favour shown to the Rhodians the day before ; but they were sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, where they remained sorrowfully enough, as they had no hope of obtaining their liberty.

Now, whilst Pasimunda was making preparation for his nuptials, Fortune, as if she had repented the injury done to Cymon, produced a new circumstance for his deliverance. Pasimunda had a brother, beneath him in years, but not in virtue, called Ormisda, who had been long talked of as about to marry a beautiful lady of that city, called Cassandra, whom Lysimachus was also in love with, and had for some time been prevented from marrying her, by divers unlucky accidents. Now, as Pasimunda was to celebrate his own nuptials with great state and feasting, he supposed it would save a great deal of expense and trouble if his brother were to marry at the same time. He consequently proposed the thing again to Cassandra's friends, and they soon brought it to a conclusion ; when it was agreed by all parties that the same day that Pasimunda brought home Iphigenia, Ormisda should bring home Cassandra.

This was very grating to Lysimachus, who saw himself now deprived of the hope which he had hitherto entertained of marrying

her himself ; but he was wise enough to conceal it, contriving a way to prevent its taking effect if possible ; none however appeared, but that of taking her away by force. This seemed easy enough on account of his office ; still he thought it not so reputable as if he had borne no office at all at that time ; but in fine, after a long debate with himself, honour gave way to love, and he resolved, happen what would, to bear away Cassandra. Thinking then what companions he should make choice of for this enterprise, as well as the means that were to be taken, he soon called Cymon to mind, whom he had in custody, as also his companions ; and thinking he could have nobody better to assist him, nor one more trusty and faithful on that occasion than Cymon, the next night he had him privately into his chamber, where he spoke to him in this manner :

“ Cymon, as the gods are the best and most liberal givers of all things to mankind, so are they also the ablest judges of our several virtues and merits ; such then as they find to be firm and constant in every respect, them do they make worthy of the greatest things. Now concerning your worth and valour, they are willing to have more certain proof of both, than it was possible for you to show while your life and actions were limited to the house of your father, whom I know to be a person of the greatest distinction ; for first, by the subtle force of love, as I am informed, have they, from a mere insensible creature, made a man of you ; and afterwards, by adverse fortune, and now, by a miserable imprisonment, are they willing to see if your soul be changed from what it was, when you appeared flushed so lately with the prize you had won. If that continues the same, I can propose nothing so agreeable to you as what I am now going to offer ; which, that you may resume your former might and valour, I shall immediately disclose. Pasimunda, overjoyed with your disappointment, and a zealous promoter, as far as in him lay, of your being put to death, is now about to celebrate his marriage with your Iphigenia, that he may enjoy that blessing, which Fortune, when she was favourable, first put into your power, and afterwards snatched away from you ; but how this must afflict you, I can easily suppose by myself, whom am like to undergo the same injury, and at the same time, with regard to my mistress Cassandra, who is to be married to his brother Ormisda. Now I see no remedy for either of us, but what consists in our own resolution, and the strength of our arms : it will be necessary, therefore, to make our way with our swords, for each of us to gain his lady : if then you value—I will not say your liberty, because that, without her, would be of little weight with you ; but, I say, if you value—your mistress, you need only follow me, and Fortune has put her into your hands.”

These words spoke comfort to the drooping soul of Cymon, who immediately replied: "Lysimachus, you could never have a more stout or a more trusty friend for such an enterprise than myself, if it be as you seem to promise: tell me then what you would have me do, and you shall see me put it nobly into execution."

Lysimachus made answer: "Three days hence the ladies are to be brought home to their espoused husbands, when you, with your friends and myself, and some people whom I can confide in, will go armed in the evening, and enter their house whilst they are in the midst of their mirth, where we will seize on the two brides, and carry them away to a ship which I have secretly provided, killing all that shall presume to oppose us."

This scheme was entirely to Cymon's liking, and he waited quietly till the time appointed. The wedding-day being now come and every part of the house full of mirth and feasting, Lysimachus, after giving the necessary orders, at the time fixed, divided Cymon and his companions with his own friends into three parties, and putting arms under their several cloaks, and animating them boldly to pursue what they had undertaken, he sent one party to the haven to secure their escape, and went with the other two to Pasimunda's house; one party he stationed at the gate, to prevent any persons from shutting them up in the house; whilst he, along with Cymon, went upstairs with the remaining party. Coming then into the dining-room, where the two brides, with many other ladies were seated at supper, they advanced to them, and throwing down all the tables, seized each his lady, and giving them into the arms of their followers, ordered them to carry them away to their ship. The brides, as well as the other ladies and servants, cried out so much, that immediately there was a great tumult.

In the meantime, Cymon and Lysimachus, with their followers, drew their swords, and came downstairs again without any opposition, till they met with Pasimunda, whom the noise had drawn thither, having in his hand a great club, when Cymon, at one stroke, laid him dead at his feet, and whilst Ormisda was running to his assistance, he was likewise killed by Cymon; and many others also of their friends, who came to their relief, were wounded and beaten back. Leaving the house then, all full of blood and confusion, they joined parties, and went directly to the ship with the booty, without the least hindrance whatever; when, putting the ladies on board, and they with all their friends following them, the shore was soon filled with crowds of people who came to rescue them, upon which they plied their oars, and sailed joyfully away for Crete. There they were cheerfully received by all their friends and relations, when they espoused their ladies, and were well pleased with their several prizes.

This occasioned great quarrels afterwards between the two islands of Cyprus and Rhodes. At length, by the interposition of friends, everything was amicably adjusted and then Cymon returned along with Iphigenia to Cyprus, and Lysimachus, in like manner, carried Cassandra back to Rhodes, where they lived very happily to the end of their days.

BOCCACCIO

ANASTASIO

IN Ravenna, an ancient city of Romagna, dwelt formerly many persons of quality ; amongst the rest was a young gentleman, named Anastasio de gli Onesti, who, by the deaths of his father and uncle, was left immensely rich ; and, being a bachelor, fell in love with one of the daughters of Signor Paolo Traversaro (of a family much superior to his own), and was in hopes, by his assiduous courtship, to gain her affection. But though his endeavours were generous, noble, and praiseworthy, so far were they from succeeding, that, on the contrary, they rather turned out to his disadvantage ; and so cruel, and even savage, was the beloved fair one (either her singular beauty or noble descent having made her thus haughty and scornful), that neither he, nor anything that he did, could ever please her.

This so afflicted Anastasio, that he was going to lay violent hands upon himself ; but, thinking better of it, he frequently had a mind to leave her entirely ; or else to hate her, if he could, as much as she had hated him. But this proved a vain design ; for he constantly found that the less his hope, the greater always was his love.

The young man persevered then in his love and his extravagant way of life, till his friends all agreed that he was destroying his constitution, as well as wasting his substance ; they therefore advised and entreated that he would leave the place, and go and live somewhere else ; for, by that means, he might lessen both his love and expense. For some time he made light of this advice, till being very much importuned, and not knowing how to refuse them, he promised to do so ; when, making extraordinary preparations, as if he was going a long journey, either into France or Spain, he mounted his horse, and left Ravenna, attended by many of his friends, and went to a place about three miles off, called Chiassi, where he ordered tents and pavilions to be brought, telling those who had accompanied him, that he meant to stay there, but that they might return to Ravenna. There he lived in the most splendid manner, inviting sometimes this company, and sometimes that, both to dine and sup, as he had used to do before.

Now it happened in the beginning of May, the season being

extremely pleasant, that, thinking of his cruel mistress, he ordered all his attendants to retire, and leave him to his own thoughts ; and then he walked along, step by step, and lost in reflection, till he came to a forest of pines. It being then the fifth hour of the day, and he advanced more than half a mile into the grove, without thinking either of his dinner, or any thing else but his love ; on a sudden he seemed to hear a most grievous lamentation, with the loud shrieks of a woman. This put an end to his meditation, when looking round him, to know what the matter was, he saw come out of a thicket full of briars and thorns, and run towards the place where he was, a most beautiful lady, quite naked, with her flesh all scratched and rent by the bushes, crying terribly, and begging for mercy. In close pursuit of her were two fierce mastiffs, biting and tearing wherever they could lay hold, and behind, upon a black steed, rode a gloomy knight, with a dagger in his hand, loading her with the bitterest imprecations.

The sight struck him at once with wonder and consternation, as well as pity for the lady, whom he was desirous to rescue from such trouble and danger if possible ; but finding himself without arms, he tore off a branch of a tree, and went forward with it, to oppose both the dogs and the knight.

The knight observing this, called out, afar off, " Anastasio, do not concern yourself ; but leave the dogs and me to do this wicked woman as she has deserved."

At these words the dogs laid hold of her, and he coming up to them, dismounted from his horse. Anastasio then stepped up to him, and said, " I know not who you are, that are acquainted thus with me : but I must tell you, that it is a most villainous action for a man, armed as you are, to pursue a naked woman, and to set dogs upon her also, as if she were a wild beast ; be assured that I shall defend her to the utmost of my power."

The knight replied, " I was once your countryman, when you were but a child, and was called Guido de gli Anastagi, at which time I was more enamoured with this woman, than ever you were with Traversaro's daughter ; but she treated me so cruelly, and with so much insolence, that I killed myself with this dagger which you now see in my hand, for which I am doomed to eternal punishment. Soon afterwards she, who moreover was rejoiced at my death, died likewise, and for her cruelty, as also for the joy which she expressed at my misery, she is condemned as well as myself ; our sentences are for her to flee before me, and for me, who loved her so well, to pursue her as a mortal enemy ; and when I overtake her, with this dagger, with which I murdered myself, do I murder her ; then I rip her open to the spine, and take out that hard and cold heart, which neither love nor pity could pierce, with all her entrails, and throw them to

the dogs ; and in a little time (so wills the justice and power of Heaven) she rises, as though she had never been dead, and renews her miserable flight, whilst we pursue her over again. Every Friday in the year, about this time, do I sacrifice her here, as you see, and on other days in other places, wherever she has thought or done anything against me : and thus being from a lover become her mortal enemy, I am to follow her for years as many as the months she was cruel to me. Let then divine justice take its course, nor offer to oppose what you are no way able to withstand."

Anastasio drew back at these words, terrified to death, and waited to see what the other was going to do. The knight, having made an end of speaking, ran at her with the utmost fury, as she was seized by the dogs, and pulled down upon her knees begging for mercy. Then with his dagger he pierced through her breast, and tore out her heart and her entrails, which they immediately devoured as if half famished. In a little time she rose again, as if nothing had happened, and fled towards the sea, the dogs biting and tearing her all the way ; the knight also being remounted, and taking his dagger, pursued her as before, till they soon got out of sight.

Upon seeing these things, Anastasio stood divided betwixt fear and pity, and at length it came into his mind that, as it happened always on a Friday, it might be of particular use. Returning then to his servants, he sent for some of his friends and relations, and said to them :

" You have often importuned me to leave off loving this my enemy, and to contract my expenses ; I am ready to do so, provided you grant me one favour, which is this, that next Friday, you engage, Paolo Traversaro, his wife and daughter with all their women friends and relations, to come and dine with me : the reason of my requiring this you will see at that time."

This seemed to them but a small matter, and returning to Ravenna they invited those whom he had desired, and though they found it difficult to prevail upon the young lady, yet the others carried her at last along with them. Anastasio had provided a magnificent entertainment under the pines where that spectacle had lately been ; and having seated all his company, he contrived that the lady should sit directly opposite to the scene of action. The last course was then no sooner served up, than the lady's shrieks began to be heard. This surprised them all, and they began to inquire what it was, and, as nobody could inform them, they all rose : when immediately they saw the lady, the dogs, and the knight, who were soon amongst them. Great was consequently the clamour, both against the dogs and the knight, and many of them went to the lady's assistance. But the knight made the same harangue to them, that he had done to Anastasio, which terrified and filled them

with wonder ; then he acted the same part over again, whilst the ladies (there were many of them present who were related to both the knight and lady, and who remembered his love and unhappy death) all lamented as much as if it had happened to themselves.

This tragical affair being ended, and the lady and knight both gone away, they held various discourse together about it ; but none seemed so much affected as Anastasio's mistress, who had heard and seen everything distinctly, and was sensible that it concerned her more than any other person, calling to mind her invariable cruelty towards him ; so that already she seemed to flee before his wrathful spirit, with the mastiffs at her heels. Such was her terror at this thought, that, turning her hatred into love, she sent that very evening a trusty damsel privately to him, to entreat him in her name to come and see her, for she was ready to fulfil his desires.

Anastasio replied, that nothing could be more agreeable to him , but that he desired no favour from her but what was consistent with her honour. The lady, who was sensible that it had been always her own fault they were not married, answered that she was willing ; and going herself to her father and mother, she acquainted them with her intention. This gave them the utmost satisfaction ; and the next Sunday the marriage was solemnised with all possible demonstrations of joy. And that spectacle was not attended with this good alone ; but all the women of Ravenna were ever after so terrified with it, that they were more ready to listen to and oblige the men than ever they had been before.

BOCCACCIO

FEDERIGO AND THE chFALCON

AT Florence there dwelt a young gentleman named Federigo, son of Filippo Alberighi, who, in feats of arms and gentility, surpassed all the youth in Tuscany. This gentleman was in love with a lady called Monna Giovanna, one of the most agreeable women in Florence, and to gain her affection, he was continually making tilts, balls, and such diversions; lavishing away his money in rich presents, and everything that was extravagant. But she, as pure in conduct as she was fair, made no account either of what he did for her sake, or of himself.

As Federigo continued to live in this manner, spending profusely, and acquiring nothing, his wealth soon began to waste, till at last he had nothing left but a very small farm, the income of which was a most slender maintenance, and a single hawk, one of the best in the world. Yet loving still more than ever, and finding he could subsist no longer in the city, in the manner he would choose to live, he retired to his farm, where he went out fowling, as often as the weather would permit, and bore his distress patiently, without ever making his necessity known to anybody.

Now it happened, after he was thus brought low, the lady's husband fell sick, and, being very rich, he made a will by which he left all his substance to an only son, who was almost grown up, and if he should die without issue, he then ordered that it should revert to his lady, whom he was extremely fond of; and when he had disposed thus of his fortune, he died. Monna Giovanna now, being left a widow, retired, as our ladies usually do during the summer season, to a house of hers in the country, near to that of Federigo: whence it happened that her son soon became acquainted with him, and they used to divert themselves together with dogs and hawks; and the boy, having often seen Federigo's hawk fly, and being strangely taken with it, was desirous of having it, though the other valued it to that degree that he knew not how to ask for it.

This being so, the boy soon fell sick, which gave his mother great concern, as he was her only child, and she ceased not to attend on

and comfort him ; often requesting, if there was any particular thing which he fancied, to let her know it, and promising to procure it for him if it was possible. The young gentleman, after many offers of this kind, at last said, " Madam, if you could contrive for me to have Federigo's hawk, I should soon be well."

She was in some perplexity at this, and began to consider how best to act. She knew that Federigo had long entertained a liking for her, without the least encouragement on her part ; therefore she said to herself, " How can I send or go to ask for this hawk, which I hear is the very best of the kind, and which is all he has in the world to maintain him ? Or how can I offer to take away from a gentleman all the pleasure that he has in life ? "

Being in this perplexity, though she was very sure of having it for a word, she stood without making any reply ; till at last the love of her son so far prevailed, that she resolved at all events to make him easy, and not send, but go herself. She then replied, " Set your heart at rest, my boy, and think only of your recovery ; for I promise you that I will go to-morrow for it the first thing I do." This afforded him such joy, that he immediately showed signs of amendment.

The next morning she went, by way of a walk, with another lady in company, to Federigo's little cottage to enquire for him. At that time, as it was too early to go out upon his diversion, he was at work in his garden. Hearing, therefore, that his mistress enquired for him at the door, he ran thither, surprised and full of joy ; whilst she with a great deal of complaisance went to meet him ; and, after the usual compliments, she said, " Good morning to you, Sir ; I am come to make you some amends for the losses you have sustained on my account ; what I mean is, that I have brought a companion to take a neighbourly dinner with you to-day."

He replied, with a great deal of humility, " Madam, I do not remember ever to have suffered any loss by your means, but rather so much good, that if I was worth anything at any time it was due to your singular merit and the love I had for you : and most assuredly this courteous visit is more welcome to me than if I had all that I have wasted returned to me to spend over again ; but you are come to a very poor host."

With these words he showed her into his house, seeming much out of countenance, and thence they went into the garden, when, having no company for her, he said, " Madam, as I have nobody else, please to admit this honest woman, a labourer's wife, to be with you, whilst I set forth the table."

Although his poverty was extreme, never till now had he been sensible of his past extravagance ; but finding nothing to entertain the lady with, for whose sake he had treated thousands, he

was in the utmost perplexity, cursing his evil fortune, and running up and down like one out of his wits.

At length, having neither money nor anything he could pawn and longing to give her something, at the same time that he would not make his case known, even so much as to his own labourer, he espied his hawk upon the perch, seized it, and finding it very fat, judged it might make a dish not unworthy of such a lady. Without further thought, then, he wrung its head off, and gave it to a girl to dress and roast carefully, whilst he laid the cloth, having a small quantity of linen yet left ; and then he returned, with a smile on his countenance, into the garden to tell Monna Giovanna that what little dinner he was able to provide was now ready. She and her friend, therefore, entered and sat down with him, he serving them all the time with great respect, when they ate the good hawk, not knowing what it was.

After dinner was over, and they had sat chatting a little while together, the lady thought it a fit time to tell her errand and addressed him courteously in this manner :

" Sir, if you call to mind your past life, and my resolution, which perhaps you may call cruelty, I doubt not but you will wonder at my presumption, when you know what I am come for : but if you had children of your own, to know how strong our natural affection is towards them, I am very sure you would excuse me. Now, my having a son forces me, against my own inclination, and all reason whatsoever, to request a thing of you, which I know you value extremely, as you have no other comfort or diversion left you in your small circumstances ; I mean your hawk, which he has taken such a fancy to, that unless I bring it back with me, I very much fear that he will die of his disorder. Therefore I entreat you, not for any regard you have for me (for in that respect you are no way obliged to me), but for that generosity with which you have always distinguished yourself, that you would please to let me have it, so that I may be able to say that my child's life has been restored to me through your gift, and that he and I are under perpetual obligations to you."

Federigo, hearing the lady's request, and knowing it was out of his power to fulfil it, began to weep before he was able to make a word of reply. This she at first attributed to his reluctance to part with his favourite bird, and expected that he was going to give her a flat denial ; but after she had waited a little for his answer, he said :

" Madam, ever since I have fixed my affections upon you, fortune has still been contrary to me in many things, and sorely I have felt them ; but all the rest is nothing to what has now come to pass. You are here to visit me in this my poor dwelling, to which in my

prosperity you would never deign to come ; you also entreat a small present from me, which it is wholly out of my power to give, as I am going briefly to tell you. As soon as I was acquainted with the great favour you designed me, I thought it proper, considering your superior merit and excellency, to treat you, according to my ability, with something choicer than is usually given to other persons, when, calling to mind my hawk, which you now request, and his goodness, I judged him a fit repast for you, and you have had him roasted. Nor could I have thought him better bestowed, had you not now desired him in a different manner, which is such a grief to me, that I shall never be at peace as long as I live " : and saying this, he produced the hawk's feathers, feet, and talons. The lady began now to blame him for killing such a bird to entertain any woman with, in her heart all the while extolling the greatness of his soul, which poverty had no power to abase.

Having now no further hopes of obtaining the hawk, she took leave of Federigo, and returned sadly to her son ; who, either out of grief for the disappointment, or through the violence of his disorder, died in a few days.

She continued sorrowful for some time ; but being left rich, and young, her brothers were very pressing with her to marry again. This went against her inclination, but finding them still importunate, and remembering Federigo's great worth, and the late instance of his generosity, in killing such a bird for her entertainment, she said, " I should rather choose to continue as I am ; but since it is your desire that I take a husband, I will have none but Federigo de gli Alberighi."

They smiled contemptuously at this, and said, " You simple woman ! what are you talking of ? He is not worth one farthing in the world."

She replied, " I believe it, brothers, to be as you say ; but know, *(that I would sooner have a man that stands in need of riches, than riches without a man.*"

They hearing her resolution, and well knowing his generous temper, gave her to him with all her wealth ; and he, seeing himself possessed of a lady whom he had so dearly loved, and of such a vast fortune, lived in all true happiness with her, and was a better manager of his affairs than he had been before.

BOCCACCIO

THE PATIENT GRISELDA

It is a long time ago, that, among the marquisses of Saluzzo, the principal or head of the family was a youth, called Gualtieri, who, as he was a bachelor, spent his whole time in hawking and hunting, without any thought of ever being encumbered with a wife and children ; in which respect, no doubt, he was very wise. But this being disagreeable to his subjects, they often pressed him to marry to the end that he might neither die without an heir, nor they be left without a lord ; offering themselves to provide such a lady for him, and of such a family, that they should have great hopes from her, and he reason enough to be satisfied.

"Worthy friends," he replied, "you urge me to do a thing which I was fully resolved against, considering what a difficult matter it is to find a person of a suitable temper with the great abundance everywhere of such as are otherwise, and how miserable also the man's life must be who is tied to a disagreeable woman. As to your getting at a woman's temper from her family, and so choosing one to please me, that seems quite a ridiculous fancy ; for, besides the uncertainty with regard to their true fathers, how many daughters do we see resembling neither father nor mother ? Nevertheless as you are so fond of having me noosed, I will agree to be so. Therefore, that I may have nobody to blame but myself, should it happen amiss, I will make my own choice ; and I protest, let me marry whom I will, that, unless you show her the respect that is due to her as my lady, you shall know, to your cost, how grievous it is to me to have taken a wife at your request, contrary to my own inclination."

The honest men replied, that they were well satisfied, provided he would but make the trial.

Now the Marquis had taken a fancy, some time before, to the behaviour of a poor country girl, who lived in a village not far from his palace and thinking that he might live comfortably enough with her, he determined, without seeking any farther, to marry her. Accordingly, he sent for her father, who was a very poor man, and acquainted him with it. Afterwards, he summoned all his subjects together, and said to them, "Gentlemen, it was and is your desire that I take a wife : I do it rather to please you than out of any liking

I have to matrimony. You know that you promised me to be satisfied, and to pay her due honour, whoever she is that I shall make choice of. The time is now come when I shall fulfil my promise to you, and I expect you to do the like to me ; I have found a young woman in the neighbourhood after my own heart, whom I intend to espouse, and bring home in a very few days. Let it be your care, then, to do honour to my nuptials, and to respect her as your sovereign lady ; so that I may be satisfied with the performance of your promise, even as you are with that of mine."

The people all declared themselves pleased, and promised to regard her in all things as their mistress. Afterwards they made preparations for a most noble feast, and the like did the Prince, inviting all his relations, and the great lords in all parts and provinces about him : he had also most rich and costly robes made, shaped by a person that seemed to be of the same size with his intended spouse ; and provided a girdle, ring, and fine coronet, with everything requisite for a bride. And when the day appointed was come, about the third hour he mounted his horse, attended by all his friends and vassals ; and having everything in readiness he said : " My lords and gentlemen, it is now time to go for my new spouse."

So on they rode to the village and when he was come near the father's house, he saw her carrying some water from the well in great haste, to go afterwards with some of her acquaintance to see the new Marchioness ; when he called her by her name, which was Griselda, and inquired where her father was. She modestly replied, " My gracious lord, he is in the house."

He then alighted from his horse, commanding them all to wait for him, and went alone into the cottage, where he found the father, who was called Giannucolo, and said to him, " Honest man, I am come to espouse thy daughter, but would first ask her some questions before thee." He then inquired whether she would make it her study to please him, and not be uneasy at any time, whatever he should do or say ; and whether she would always be obedient ; with more to that purpose. To which she answered, " Yes."

He then led her out by the hand, and made her strip before them all ; and ordering the rich apparel to be brought which he had provided, he had her clothed completely, and a coronet set upon her head, all disordered as her hair was ; after which, every one being in amaze, he said, " Behold, this is the person whom I intend for my wife, provided she will accept of me for her husband." Then turning towards her, who stood quite abashed, " Will you," said he, " have me for your husband ? "

She replied, " Yes, if it so please your lordship."

" Well," he replied, " and I take you for my wife."

So he espoused her in that public manner, and mounting her on

a palfrey, conducted her honourably to his palace, celebrating the nuptials with as much pomp and grandeur as though he had been married to the daughter of the King of France; and the young bride showed apparently, that with her garments she had changed both her mind and behaviour.

She had a most agreeable person, and was so amiable, and so good-natured withal, that she seemed rather a lord's daughter than a poor shepherd's; at which every one that knew her before was greatly surprised. She was so obedient also to her husband, and so obliging in all respects, that he thought himself the happiest man in the world; and to her subjects likewise so gracious and condescending, that they all honoured and loved her as their own lives, praying for her health and prosperity, and declaring, contrary to their former opinion, that Gualtieri was the most prudent and sharp-sighted Prince in the whole world; for that no one could have discerned such virtues under a mean habit, and a country disguise, but himself.

In a very short time her discreet behaviour and good works were the common subject of discourse, not in that country only, but everywhere else; and what had been objected to the Prince, with regard to his marrying her, now took a contrary turn. They had not lived long together before she proved with child, and at length brought forth a daughter, for which he made great rejoicings.

But soon afterwards a new fancy came into his head, and that was, to make trial of her patience by long and intolerable sufferings: so he began with harsh words, and an appearance of great uneasiness; telling her that his subjects were greatly displeased with her for her mean parentage, especially as they saw she bore children; and that they did nothing but murmur at the daughter already born. Which, when she heard, without changing countenance, or her resolution, in any respect, she replied, "My lord, pray dispose of me as you think most for your honour and happiness: I shall entirely acquiesce, knowing myself to be meaner than the meanest of the people, and that I was altogether unworthy of that dignity to which your favour was pleased to advance me." This was very agreeable to the Prince, seeing that she was no way elevated with the honour he had conferred upon her.

Afterwards, having often told her, in general terms, that his subjects could not bear with the daughter that was born of her, he sent one of his servants, whom he had instructed what to do, who, with a very sorrowful countenance, said to her, "Madam, I must either lose my own life, or obey my lord's commands: now he had ordered me to take your daughter, and——" without saying anything more. She, hearing these words, and noting the fellow's looks, remembering also what she had heard before from her lord,

concluded that he had orders to destroy the child. So she took it out of the cradle, kissed it, and gave it her blessing ; when, without changing countenance, though her heart throbbed with maternal affection, she tenderly laid it in the servant's arms, and said, " Take it, and do what thy lord and mine has commanded ; but, prithee, leave it not to be devoured by the fowls or wild beasts, unless that be his will." Taking the child, he acquainted the Prince with what she said, who was greatly surprised at her constancy ; and he sent the same person with it to a relation at Bologna, desiring her, without revealing whose child it was, to see it carefully brought up and educated. Afterwards the lady became with child a second time, and was delivered of a son, at which he was extremely pleased.

But, not satisfied with what he had already done, he began to grieve and persecute her still more ; saying one day to her, seemingly much out of temper, " Since thou hast brought me this son, I am able to live no longer with my people ; for they mutiny to that degree, that a poor shepherd's grandson is to succeed, and be their lord after me, that, unless I would run the risk of being driven out of my dominions, I must needs dispose of this child as I did the other ; and then send thee away, in order to take a wife more suitable to me."

She heard this with a great deal of resignation, making only this reply : " My lord, study only your own ease and happiness, without the least care for me ; for nothing is agreeable to me, but what is pleasing to yourself."

Not many days after, he sent for the son in the same manner as he had done for the daughter ; and, seeming also as if he had procured him to be destroyed, had him conveyed to Bologna, to be taken care of with the daughter. This she bore with the same resolution as before, at which the Prince wondered greatly, declaring to himself, that no other woman was capable of doing the like. And, were it not that he had observed her extremely fond of her children, whilst that was agreeable to him, he should have thought it want of affection in her ; but he saw it was only her entire obedience and condescension. The people, imagining that the children were both put to death, blamed him to the last degree, thinking him the most cruel and worst of men, and showing great compassion for the lady ; who, whenever she was in company with the ladies of her acquaintance, and they condoled with her for her loss, would only say, " It was not my will, but his who begot them."

But more years being now passed, and he resolving to make the last trial of her patience, declared, before many people, that he could no longer bear to keep Griselda as his wife, owning that he had done very foolishly, and like a young man, in marrying her, and that he meant to solicit the Pope for a dispensation to take another,

and send her away : for which he was much blamed by many worthy persons ; but he said nothing in return, only that it should be so. She, hearing this, and expecting to go home to her father's, and possibly tend the cattle as she had done before ; whilst she saw some other lady possessed of him, whom she dearly loved and honoured, was perhaps secretly grieved ; but as she had withstood other strokes of fortune, so she determined resolutely to do now.

Soon afterwards, Gualtieri had counterfeit letters come to him, as from Rome, acquainting all his people that his Holiness thereby dispensed with his marrying another and turning away Griselda. He then had her brought before them, and said, " Woman, by the Pope's leave I may dispose of thee, and take another wife. As my ancestors, then, have been all sovereign princes of this country, and thine only peasants, I intend to keep thee no longer, but to send thee back to thy father's cottage, with the same portion which thou broughtest me, and afterwards to make choice of one more suitable in quality to myself."

It was with the utmost difficulty she could now refrain from tears ; and she replied, " My lord, I was always sensible that my servile condition would no way accord with your high rank and descent. For what I have been, I own myself indebted to Providence and you ; I considered it as a favour lent me : you are now pleased to demand it back ; I therefore willingly restore it. Behold the ring with which you espoused me ; I deliver it to you. You bid me take the dowry back which I brought you ; you will have no need for a teller to count it, nor I for a purse to put it in, much less a sumpter-horse to carry it away ; for I have not forgotten that you took me naked ; and if you think it decent to expose that body, which has borne you two children, in that manner, I am contented ; but I would entreat you, as a recompense for my virginity, which I brought you, and do not carry away, that you would please to let me have one shift over and above my dowry."

He, though ready to weep, yet put on a stern countenance, and said, " Thou shalt have one only then." And, notwithstanding the people all desired that she might have an old gown, to keep her body from shame, who had been his wife thirteen years and upwards, yet it was all in vain ; so she left his palace in that manner, and returned weeping to her father's, to the great grief of all who saw her.

The poor man, never supposing that the Prince would keep her long as his wife, and expecting this thing to happen every day, had safely laid up the garments of which she had been despoiled the day he espoused her. He now brought them to her, and she put them on, and went as usual about her father's little household affairs, bearing this fierce trial of adverse fortune with the greatest courage imaginable. The Prince then gave it out that he was to espouse

a daughter of one of the counts of Panago ; and, seeming as if he made great preparations for his nuptials, he sent for Griselda to come to him, and said to her, " I am going to bring this lady home whom I have just married, and intend to show her all possible respect at her first coming : thou knowest that I have no women with me able to set out the rooms, and do many other things which are requisite on so solemn an occasion. As, therefore, thou art best acquainted with the state of the house, I would have thee make such provision as thou shalt judge proper, and invite what ladies thou wilt, even as though thou wert mistress of the house, and when the marriage is ended, get thee home to thy father's again."

Though these words pierced like daggers to the heart of Griselda, who was unable to part with her love for the Prince so easily as she had done her great fortune, yet she replied, " My lord, I am ready to fulfil all your commands." She then went in her coarse attire into the palace, whence she had just before departed in her shift, and with her own hands did she begin to sweep, and set all the rooms to rights, cleaning the stools and benches in the hall like the meanest servant, and directing what was to be done in the kitchen, never giving over till everything was in order, and as it ought to be. After this was done, she invited, in the Prince's name, all the ladies in the country to come to the feast. And on the day appointed for the marriage, meanly clad as she was, she received them in the most genteel and cheerful manner imaginable.

Now Gualtieri, who had his children carefully brought up at Bologna (the girl being about twelve years old, and one of the prettiest creatures that ever were seen, and the boy six), had sent to his kinswoman there, to desire she would bring them, with an honourable retinue, to Saluzzo ; giving it out all the way she came that she was bringing the young lady to be married to him, without letting any one know to the contrary. Accordingly they all three set forwards, attended by a goodly train of gentry, and, after some days' travelling, reached Saluzzo about dinner-time, when they found the whole country assembled, waiting to see their new lady. The young lady was most graciously received by all the women present, and being come into the hall where the tables were all covered, Griselda, meanly dressed as she was, went cheerfully to meet her, saying, " Your ladyship is most kindly welcome."

The ladies, who had greatly importuned the Prince, though to no purpose, to let Griselda be in a room by herself, or else that she might have some of her own clothes, and not appear before strangers in that manner, were now seated, and going to be served round, whilst the young lady was universally admired, and every one said that the Prince had made a good change ; but Griselda, in particular, highly commended both her and her brother. The Marquis, now

thinking that he had seen enough with regard to his wife's patience, and perceiving that in all her trials she was still the same, being persuaded, likewise, that this proceeded from no want of understanding in her, because he knew her to be singularly prudent, he thought it time to take her from that anguish which he supposed she might conceal under her firm and constant deportment. So, making her come before all the company, he said, with a smile, "What thinkest thou, Griselda, of my bride?"

"My lord," she replied, "I like her extremely well; and if she be as prudent as she is fair, you may be the happiest man in the world with her: but I most humbly beg that you would not take those heart-breaking measures with this lady as you did with your last wife, because she is young, and has been tenderly educated, whereas the other was inured to hardships from a child."

Gualtieri, perceiving that, though Griselda thought that person was to be his wife, she nevertheless answered him with great humility and sweetness of temper, made her sit down by him, and said, "Griselda, it is now time for you to reap the fruit of your long patience, and that they who have reputed me to be cruel, unjust, and a monster in nature, may know that what I have done has been all along with a view to teach you how to behave as a wife; to show them how to choose and keep a wife; and, lastly, to secure my own ease and quiet as long as we live together, which I was apprehensive might have been endangered by my marrying. Therefore I had a mind to prove you by harsh and injurious treatment; and not being sensible that you have ever transgressed my will, either in word or deed, I now seem to have met with that happiness I desired. I intend, then, to restore in one hour what I had taken away from you in many, and to make you the sweetest recompense for the many bitter pangs I have caused you to suffer. Accept, therefore, this young lady, whom you thought my spouse, and her brother, as your children and mine. They are the same whom you and many others believed that I had been the means of cruelly murdering: and I am your husband, who love and value you above all things; assuring myself that no person in the world can be happier in a wife than I am."

With this he embraced her most affectionately, when, rising up together (she weeping for joy), they went where their daughter was sitting, quite astonished with these things, and tenderly saluted both her and her brother, undeceiving them and the whole company. At this the women all arose, overjoyed, from the tables, and taking Griselda into the chamber, they clothed her with her own noble apparel, and as a marchioness, resembling such an one even in rags, and brought her into the hall. And being extremely rejoiced with her son and daughter, and every one expressing the utmost satisfac-

tion at what had come to pass, the feasting was prolonged many days.

The Marquis was judged a very wise man, though abundantly too severe, and the trial of his lady most intolerable ; but as for Griselda, she was beyond compare. In a few days the Marquis took Giannuculo from his drudgery, and maintained him as his father-in-law, and so he lived very comfortably to a good old age. Gualtieri afterwards married his daughter to one of equal nobility, continuing the rest of his life with Griselda, and showing her all the respect and honour that was possible.

What can we say, then, but that divine spirits may descend from heaven into the meanest cottages ; whilst royal palaces shall produce such as seem rather adapted to have the care of hogs, than the government of men ? Who but Griselda could, not only without a tear, but even with seeming satisfaction, undergo the most rigid and unheard-of trials by her husband ? Many women there are, who, if turned out of doors naked in that manner, would have procured themselves fine clothes, adorning at once their own persons and their husband's brows.

FRANCO SACCHETTI

1335-1400

MESSER BERNABO OF MILAN

MESSER BERNABO, lord of Milan, once bestowed a handsome reward upon a certain miller, for the somewhat singular reason of having received from the shrewd artificer some very witty and caustic replies. Our said governor, who bore a most cruel and implacable disposition towards all kind of offenders, nevertheless possessed the art of tempering his ferocity so as to give it an air of real justice.

The case he had here in hand was that of a wealthy abbot, who had been fined by the governor in four florins for his negligent care in the education of two mastiff whelps entrusted to his spiritual direction, but which had turned out somewhat too cruel and quarrelsome. The covetous father upon this cried out for mercy, to which the governor merely replied, that he must infallibly pay the fine, unless he had the wit to give a satisfactory explanation of four points he should propose to him; which were these:

"What distance, father, do you apprehend it is from hence to heaven? What quantity of water is there in the sea? What do people do in the infernal regions? And fourthly, What may be the value of my person?"

The good father hung his head on one side in a reflecting attitude for some time, but at length only uttered a deep sigh, perfectly at a loss what to do. To gain time, however, he begged he might be allowed to return home, to consider these important questions somewhat more maturely. His Excellency would only grant him a single day, and, moreover, made him enter into good security for his speedy return. The priest, in a doleful mood, then measured his steps back again to his abbey, blowing like a broken-winded steed. On his arrival, the first person he met was the jolly miller, who, observing his melancholy air, inquired into the nature of his distress and the exhausted state of his breathing.

"I may well be out of breath," he exclaimed, "when his Excellency has set me no less than four knotty points to solve, which

neither the wisdom of Solomon, nor that of the Stagyrte himself, would have been able to unriddle."

"Very likely," returned the miller; "but if you will trust to me, I will bring you through the scrape at once."

"The Lord grant you could," said the poor abbot, with a pious ejaculation.

"Yes, and the Lord and all the saints in heaven will, if you will only let them; that I think I may fairly say."

"If you were really in earnest, and could be as good as your word, Mr. Miller, you might afterwards count upon me in everything during the whole of your life."

"That is saying a good deal too," returned the miller, "but I will give it full credit for the sake of your cloth."

"To be sure," said the reverend father; "but how do you propose to get me off the horns of this dilemma? that is the question."

"How!" exclaimed the miller in a scornful tone; "why, I shall shave my beard, and take your hood and cloak, and present myself to-morrow morning in your place. Trust me, I will answer his Excellency's questions, whatever they may be; and he shall never find out the difference between us, except it be from the difference in our wits."

"The Lord bless thee for an impudent varlet!" cried the honest father. "As I hope for salvation, I verily believe thou wilt bring me through! Get thee gone, and rely upon thy impudence; it will appear a thousand years until I hear the result."

Having disguised himself in the good abbot's suit, our knight of the white hat accordingly set out for the city early the ensuing day, and soon arriving at his Excellency's palace, knocked pretty loudly at the door, telling the porter he had brought the requisite answers for his master, which he must deliver by word of mouth.

Hearing who he was, his Excellency ordered the abbot to be brought straightway into his presence, wondering how he had already prepared himself for his task. The false friar, with reverence due, accosted his Excellency with a sidling air, having admirably metamorphosed his physiognomy and imitating the abbot's voice to perfection. With very little ceremony he was required to repeat what he had learned in the way of explanation of the four points in dispute. Expressing his readiness, he was first requested to point out the exact distance between earth and heaven.

"Having considered the matter very maturely," said the miller, "I find there are just thirty-six millions eight hundred and fifty-four miles, seventy-two yards, and twenty-two feet."

"You must have measured it very exactly," exclaimed his Excellency; "but how will you prove it is correct?"

"How!" retorted the bold miller; "as such matters are always

proved. Let your Excellency refer it to arbitration, and if it should not be found upon a second measurement exactly what I have stated, hang me up by the neck upon the next tree. It seems you want to know next how much water there is contained in the sea. Now this has cost me a good deal of trouble, for it would neither stand still while I measured it, nor stop from receiving its tributary streams. Yet I have nevertheless compassed the difficulty, and find there are just twenty-five thousand nine hundred and eighty-two millions of vats, seven barrels, seven bottles, and two glasses of water in the sea."

"But how have you learned that, Mr. Abbot?" inquired the governor.

"Why, if you do not like to believe me," retorted the other, "order the proper vessels to be prepared, and measure it again. If you do not find just as much as I have told you, quarter me alive without any mercy. The third question, I think, you want resolved, is how people contrive to employ themselves in the world below. To this I answer, they do much as we do here; they cut and hack one another until they are weary of such sport; they persecute and they hang one another."

"But what are your reasons for this opinion?"

"Do you ask me for reasons?" returned the miller. "Why, I spoke with the very man who returned from a tour there, the same from whom the divine Florentine received his account of the infernal government, and the whole of its civil and judicial polity; but the traveller, I believe, is now dead, and went back again. And if you are not satisfied with my word for the truth of it, I refer you to him, and would advise you to send and see. The fourth and last of your questions concerns the worth of your own respected person; and I tell you it amounts to neither more nor less than two shillings and five pence."

Upon hearing this, Messer Bernabo rose in a furious passion, crying, "Villain, I will make you eat your words. How, you rogue abbot, am I worth no more than an old rusty pan?"

The poor miller, beginning to quake in his shoes, entreated in a somewhat milder tone that his Excellency would but deign to hear his reasons, saying, "You are aware, my honoured lord, that our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was sold for only thirty pence, and surely you will not be offended at being rated one mark lower."

The moment he heard this answer, the governor was convinced he had no longer the honest abbot to deal with, and eyeing him more narrowly, he perceived him to be of larger dimensions, both in body and mind, than his friend the honest abbot could boast.

"You say very true," he exclaimed, "but you are not the abbot friend: at least I have you there."

The poor miller, fearing upon this that it was all over with him, fell piteously upon his knees, with uplifted hands, confessing it was true he was only the good father's grinder of corn. He then proceeded to explain the occasion of his appearance in this disguise, for the mere purpose of amusing all parties, but of giving offence to none.

"Then by all the saints in heaven," cried Messer Bernabo, "I swear, since he has made thee abbot, an abbot thou shalt remain. By this sword I confirm his decree, and henceforth he shall serve thee, abbot, as thine honest miller, and cheat thee of thy flour. The proceeds of the monastery are thine, those of the mill be his"; and this sentence he strictly enforced.

FRANCO SACCHETTI

THE BLIND BEGGAR OF
ORVIETO

A BLIND man of Orvieto, of the name of Cola, hit upon a device to recover a hundred florins he had been cheated of, which showed he was possessed of all the eyes of Argus, though he had unluckily lost his own. And this he did without wasting a farthing either upon law or arbitration, by sheer dexterity; for he had formerly been a barber, and accustomed to shave very close, having then all his eyes about him, which had been now closed for about thirty years. Alms seemed then the only resource to which he could betake himself, and such was the surprising progress he in a short time made in his new trade, that he counted a hundred florins in his purse, which he secretly carried about him until he could find a safer place. His gains far surpassed anything he had realised with his razor and scissors; indeed, they increased so fast that he no longer knew where to bestow them; until one morning happening to remain the last, as he believed, in the church, he thought of depositing his purse of a hundred florins under a loose tile in the floor behind the door, knowing the situation of the place perfectly well.

After listening for some time, without hearing a foot stirring, he very cautiously laid it in the spot; but unluckily there remained a certain Juccio Pezzicheruolo, offering his adoration before an image of San Giovanni Boccadoro, who happened to see Cola busily engaged behind the door. He continued his adorations until he saw the blind man depart, when, not in the least suspecting the truth, he approached and searched the place. He soon found the identical tile, and on removing it with the help of his knife, he found the purse, which he very quietly put into his pocket, replacing the tiles just as they were; and resolving to say nothing about it, he went home.

At the end of three days, the blind mendicant, desirous of inspecting his treasure, took a quiet time for visiting the place, and removing the tile, searched a long while in great perturbation, but all in vain, to find his beloved purse. At last, replacing things just as they were, he was compelled to return in no very enviable state of

mind to his dwelling ; and there meditating over his loss, the harvest of the toil of so many days, by dint of intense thinking a bright thought struck him, as frequently happens by cogitating in the dark, how he had yet a kind of chance of redeeming his lost spoils.

Accordingly, in the morning he called his young guide, a lad about nine years old, saying, " My son, lead me to church " ; and before setting out he tutored him how he was to behave, seating himself at his side before the entrance, and particularly remarking every person who should enter into the church. " Now, if you happen to see any one who takes particular notice of me, and who either laughs or makes any sign, be sure you observe it and tell me."

The boy promised he would ; and they proceeded accordingly, and took their station before the church. There they remained the whole of the morning, till just as they were beginning to despair, Juccio made his appearance, and fixing his eyes upon the blind man could not refrain from laughing. When the dinner-hour arrived the father and son prepared to leave the place, the former inquiring by the way whether his son had observed any one looking hard at him as he passed along. " That I did," answered the lad, " but only one, and he laughed as he went past. I do not know his name, but he is strongly marked with the smallpox, and lives somewhere near the Frati Minori."

" Do you think, my dear lad," said his father, " you could take me to his shop, and tell me when you see him there ? "

" To be sure I could," said the lad.

" Then come, let us lose no time," replied his father, " and when we are there tell me, and while I speak to him you can step on one side and wait for me."

So the sharp little fellow led him along the way until he reached a cheesemonger's stall, when he acquainted his father, and brought him close to it. No sooner did the blind man hear him speaking with his customers, than he recognised him for the same Juccio with whom he had formerly been acquainted during his days of light. When the coast was a little clear, our blind hero entreated some moments' conversation, and Juccio, half suspecting the occasion, took him on one side into a little room, saying,

" Cola, friend, what good news ? "

" Why," said Cola, " I am come to consult you, in great hope you will be of use to me. You know it is a long time since I lost my sight, and being in a destitute condition, I was compelled to earn my subsistence by begging alms. Now, by the grace of God, and with the help of you and of other good people of Orvieto, I have saved a sum of two hundred florins, one of which I have deposited in a safe place,

and the other is in the hands of my relations, which I expect to receive with interest in the course of a week. Now if you would consent to receive, and to employ for me to the best advantage, the whole sum of two hundred florins, it would be doing me a great kindness, for there is no one besides in all Orvieto in whom I dare to confide ; not do I like to be at the expense of paying a notary for doing business which we can as well transact ourselves. Only I wish you would say nothing about it, but receive the two hundred florins from me to employ as you think best. Say not a word about it, for there would be an end of my calling were it known I had received so large a sum in alms."

Here the blind mendicant stopped ; and the sly Juccio imagining he might thus become master of the entire sum, said he should be very happy to serve him in every way he could, and would return an answer the next morning as to the best way of laying out the money. Cola then took his leave, while Juccio going directly for the purse, deposited it in its old place, being in full expectation of soon receiving it again with the addition of the other hundred, as it was clear that Cola had not yet missed the sum. The cunning old mendicant on his part expected that he would do no less, and trusting that his plot might have succeeded, he set out the very same day to the church, and had the delight, on removing the tile, to find his purse really there. Seizing upon it with the utmost eagerness, he concealed it under his clothes, and placing the tiles exactly in the same position, he hastened home whistling, troubling himself very little about his appointment of the next day.

The sly thief, Juccio, set out accordingly the next morning to see his friend Cola, and actually met him on the road. " Whither are you going ? " inquired Juccio.

" I was going," said Cola, " to your house."

The former then, taking the blind man aside, said, " I am resolved to do what you ask ; and since you are pleased to confide in me, I will tell you of a plan I have in hand of laying out your money to advantage. If you will put the two hundred into my possession, I will take a purchase in cheese and salt meat, a speculation which cannot fail to turn to good account."

" Thank you," said Cola ; " I am going to-day for the other hundred, which I mean to bring, and when you have got them both, you can do with them what you think proper."

Juccio said, " Then let me have them soon, for I think I can secure this bargain ; and as the soldiers are come into the town, who are fond of these articles, I think it cannot fail to answer ; so go, and Heaven speed you." And Cola went ; but with very different intentions from those imagined by his friend—Cola being now clear-sighted, and Juccio truly blind.

The next day Cola called on his friend with very downcast and melancholy looks, and when Juccio bade him good day, he said, "I wish from my soul it were good, or even a middling day for me."

"Why, what is the matter?"

"The matter!" said Cola, "why it is all over with me; some rascal has stolen a hundred florins from the place where they were hidden, and I cannot recover a penny from my relations, so that I may eat my fingers off for anything I have to expect."

Juccio replied, "This is like all the rest of my speculations. I have invariably lost where I expected to make a good hit. What I shall do I know not; for if the person should choose to keep me to the agreement I made for you, I shall be in a pretty dilemma indeed."

"Yet," said Cola, "I think my condition is still worse than yours. I shall be sadly distressed, and shall have to amass a fresh capital, which will take me ever so long. And when I have got it, I will take care not to conceal it in a hole in the floor, or trust it, Juccio, into any friends' hands."

"But," said Juccio, "if we could contrive to recover what is owing by your relations, we might still make some pretty profit by it, I doubt not." For he thought, if he could only get hold of the hundred he had returned, it would still be something in his way.

"Why," said Cola, "to tell the truth, if I were to proceed against my relations, I believe I might get it; but such a thing would ruin my business, my dear Juccio, for ever: the world would know I was worth money, and I should get no more money from the world; so I fear I shall hardly be able to profit by your kindness, though I shall always consider myself as much obliged as if I had actually cleared a large sum. Moreover, I am going to teach another blind man my profession, and if we have luck you shall see me again, and we can venture a speculation together."

So far the wily mendicant; to whom Juccio said, "Well, go and try to get money soon, and bring it; you know where to find me, but look sharp about you, and the Lord speed you: farewell."

"Farewell," said Cola, "and I am well rid of thee," he whispered to himself; and going upon his way, in a short time he doubled his capital; but he no longer went near his friend Juccio to know how he should invest it. He had great diversion in telling the story to his companions during their feasts, always concluding, "By St. Lucia! Juccio is the blinder man of the two: he thought it was a bold stroke to risk his hundred to double the amount."

It is impossible to describe Juccio's vexation on going to the church and finding the florins were gone. His regret was far greater than if he had actually lost a hundred of his own ; as is known to be the case with all inveterate rogues, half of whose pleasure consists in depriving others of their lawful property.

FRANCO SACCHETTI

MICHELOZZO AND THE ASSES

It happened that a certain Spanish cavalier of the name of Messer Giletto, just returned from the Holy Sepulchre, arrived at Milan, bringing with him a beautiful ass, one of the pleasantest animals ever seen ; for he would rise upon his hind-feet like a French dancing-dog, and caper as long as his master pleased, and when requested to sing, he would utter notes far more loud and sonorous than any of his race ; indeed, such was its compass, that it displayed much of the variety of the human voice. Nor was this the least of his great accomplishments which attracted notice ; and when his master paid a visit on him to Messer Bernabo of Milan, such was the fame thereof, that after their first introduction he immediately inquired to whom the ass belonged.

The cavalier answered that the ass was his, and was one of the most amusing animals in the world. Being very richly caparisoned, after a close inspection, Messer Bernabo declared that he appeared worthy of his master's praises, and admired him greatly. So he seated the cavalier by his side, who ordered the ass to display his paces, requesting to know if his Lordship would like to witness one of his tricks. " If it be anything new, let me see it, I entreat you," said the other, which the cavalier immediately did, to their no small diversion ; M. Michelozzo, a Florentine, at the same time being present.

Messer Giletto, observing his Lordship so amazingly diverted with his tricks, said, " You will do me great honour, sir, as I have nothing better to give, would you deign to accept him at my hands, not indeed for his value, which is little, but in order to afford some amusement to your Lordship's family."

Messer Bernabo, highly gratified with the offer, accepted it, and the very same day the donor received a noble charger with more than a hundred florins in return ; and after receiving many other honours, he continued his journey.

Now our friend Michelozzo, having witnessed the whole of these proceedings, also took leave of his Lordship and returned to Florence,

where a bright thought struck him, that if he were to present the governor with a pair of fine asses, it might be no bad speculation, and perhaps advance him greatly in his favour. So he sent his emissaries through the Roman territories, and they had the good fortune to meet with two of a superior size, which cost him forty florins. On their arrival in Florence, he had them both very exactly measured by a saddler, commissioned to purchase the requisite quantity of fine scarlet and cloth of gold, who decked them out in the most splendid style, not omitting even to adorn their comely ears. The arms of the Visconti were likewise emblazoned on the neck and crest; those of the owner being placed lower down, approaching the feet. Two handsome pages, one on horseback and one on foot, with a groom to urge them from behind, were next ordered to convey these beautiful animals very carefully, to be presented on his part to the said Lord.

Great was the admiration of the Florentines as the procession passed along the streets; and what it was, and where it was going, was the general cry. "They are asses, cannot you see?" replied the page, "a present from Michelozzo to Lord Bernabo."

Some of them thought it very fine, some made faces and shrugged up their shoulders, while others declared it was all a piece of folly, such as they should not easily see again; with other commentaries, of which the mouth of the people is usually full.

Having reached the gate of San Gallo, their splendid accoutrements were removed and carefully packed up, until they were about to enter Bologna, when the asses were again equipped, in order to attract the admiration of the citizens; among whom the same questions as before took place: except that they were here mistaken for chargers going to enter the lists. This favourable opinion one of the animals, however, destroyed by braying in a most discordant tone, which elicited a shrewd remark from an old citizen: "Faith, I believe they are only a pair of stupid asses."

"Yes, sir," said the page, "which a gentleman of Florence is going to present to my lord of Milan."

"But," rejoined the citizen, "he ought to have put them in a cage, as they sing so well."

On arriving at the inn of Felice Ammannati, the entertainment was doubly renewed, every one declaring it the greatest wonder that had ever been known. "But I trust," said the facetious host, "that though these carcasses are really going to the governor they will leave behind them what I value much more for the benefit of my fields, unless it is to be forwarded to your master in Florence."

After a hearty laugh, the beasts proceeded on their journey; and such was the impression their appearance everywhere made, that their fame travelling before them, several miracles were said to have happened as of old in Parma, Piacenza, and Lodi ere they reached

their destination. When they at length arrived there, the groom knocked at the city gate, informing the porter they had brought a rich present to his lord Bernado on the part of Michelozzo, a gentleman of Florence.

The castellan observing through the wicket two asses thus gorgeously arrayed in scarlet trappings, hastened to acquaint his master with the fact. The governor, in no little perplexity on hearing this, gave orders that they should be admitted, when the head page explained the nature of his embassy, presenting the asses on the part of Michelozzo to the lord of Milan. The latter immediately replied, "You will tell your master that I am sorry he should think of thus depriving himself of the company of his companions, leaving himself behind ; and so I bid you good day."

He then sent for one of his officers, of the name of Bergamino da Crema, commanding him to take the scarlet cloth, and to get a dress made of it for himself, and another for one of his muleteers ; and to place the emblazoned coats of arms, one in the front, and one on the back of each dress, with those of Michelozzo below, when they were to await his further orders. Bergamino then went, and disposing of the asses in a stable, took possession of their rich accoutrements, sending the same day for a tailor to measure and cut them up into dresses for himself and three other muleteers of the court. This done, they proceeded to load the asses, and going out of Milan, they soon returned with them, bringing corn, and attracting the attention of the people wherever they passed along. On inquiry into the occasion of these fine scarlet dresses, "Michelozzo," replied they, "a Florentine gentleman, presented them to us, and so we wear them out of regard to the donor."

Bergamino next ordered the clerk of the governor to return a suitable reply to Michelozzo, how they had received the asses adorned with scarlet robes, and speedily put them under a course of burdens, finding them exceedingly useful in the service of his master, while their drivers had arrayed themselves in the rich trappings they formerly wore, besides displaying his coat of arms below that of their master, with all which, in honour of the donor, they had that day made a solemn procession with their burdens through Milan, attributing the whole honour to himself. This letter was signed and sealed, and sent, bearing the signature in proper form of "Bergamino da Crema, Equipage-master and Mule-driver to his Excellency the Lord of Milan," etc. etc., directed "To my brother Michelozzo, or Bambozzo de' Bamboli, of Florence" ; and delivered to the messenger, who, after lingering in vain for a pecuniary gratification, set out with his despatches for Florence.

On perusing the direction, Signor Michelozzo began to change colour, proceeding to read, he grew worse and worse, till he arrived

at the name of his correspondent, the master of the mules. Claspings his hands in a paroxysm of despair, he inquired of the messenger to whom he had delivered the letter. "To the governor," replied the man.

"And what answer did he give?"

"He said he was sorry you should deprive yourself of your companions for his sake."

"And who gave you this letter?"

"His servant," replied he, "for I could never get to see his master again."

"Heavens!" cried Michelozzo, "you have ruined me! What know I of Bergamino or Merdollino? Get out of my house, and never come near me again."

"I will go or stay, just as you please," said the man; "but I must tell you the truth: we have made fools of ourselves wherever we appeared; it is impossible to say how much you were laughed at; you would be quite astonished if you knew."

"Why, what could they say? Did no one ever make a present to a lord, think you, before?"

"Yes, sir, but never of asses, I believe," said the man.

"But," returned his master, "you were with me yourself when the Spanish cavalier made a present of his."

"True, sir, but that was mere accident; besides, his was a knowing beast, and yours are as stupid as asses need to be."

"I tell you, you lie," said his master; "one of their feet was worth the whole body of the other ass, equipped as they were: you have ruined me, I say; and get about your business," which the man was glad enough to do.

In a short time after, our hero grew melancholy and sickened from the vexation of his adventure; in which, as the present which he made was of a novel nature, he was in return treated in a manner perfectly novel and appropriate.

SER GIOVANNI

1378

THE LOVE TALE OF GALGANO AND MINOCCIA

THERE resided in Sienna a noble youth of the name of Galgano, who, besides his birth and riches, was extremely clever, valiant, and affable, which won him the regard of all ranks of people in the place. But I am very sorry to add that, attracted by the beauty of a Siennese lady, no other, you must know, than the fair Minoccia, wedded to our noble cavalier, Messer Stricca (though I beg this may go no farther), our young friend unfortunately, and too late, fell passionately in love with her.

So violently enamoured did he shortly become, that he purloined her glove, which he wore with her favourite colours wherever he went, at tilts and tourneys, at rich feasts and festivals, all of which he was proud to hold in honour of his love : yet all these failed to render him agreeable to the lady, a circumstance that caused our poor friend Galgano no little pain and perplexity. A prey to the excessive cruelty and indifference of one dearer to him than his own life, who neither noticed nor listened to him, he still followed her like her shadow, contriving to be near her at every party, whether a bridal or a christening, a funeral or a play. Long and vainly, with love-messages after love-messages, and presents after presents, did he sue ; but never would the noble lady deign to receive or listen to them for a moment, ever bearing herself more reservedly and harshly as he more earnestly pressed the ardour of his suit.

It was thus his fate to remain subject to this very irksome and overwhelming passion, until, wearied out, at length he would break into words of grief and bitterness against his "bosom's lord." "Alas ! dread master of my destiny," he would say, "O Love ! can you behold me thus wasting my very soul away, ever loving but never beloved again ? See to it, dread lord, that you are not, in so doing, offending against your own laws !" And so, unhappily dwelling upon the lady's cruelty, he seemed fast verging upon despair ; then again humbly resigning himself to the yoke he bore, he resolved to

await some interval of grace, watching, however vainly, for some occasion of rendering himself more pleasing to the object he adored.

Now it happened that Messer Stricca and his consort went to pass some days at their country seat near Sienna ; and it was not long before the love-sick Galgano was observed to cross their route, to hang upon their skirts, and to pass along the same way, always with the hawk upon his hand, as if violently set upon bird-hunting. Often, indeed, he passed so close to the villa where the lady dwelt, that one day being seen by Messer Stricca, who recognised him, he was very familiarly entreated to afford them the pleasure of his company ; “ and I hope,” added Messer Stricca, “ that you will stay the evening with us.” Thanking his friend very kindly for the invitation, Galgano, strange to say, at the same time begged to be held excused, pleading another appointment, which he believed—he was sorry—he was obliged to keep.”

“ Then,” added Messer Stricca, “ at least step in and take some little refreshment ” : to which the only reply returned was, “ A thousand thanks, and farewell, Messer Stricca, for I am in haste.”

The moment the latter had turned his back, our poor lover began to upbraid himself bitterly for not availing himself of the invitation, exclaiming, “ What a wretch am I not to accept such an offer as this ! I should at least have seen her—her whom from my soul I cannot help loving beyond all else in the world.”

As he thus went, meditating upon the same subject along his solitary way, it chanced that he sprang a large jay, on which he instantly gave his hawk the wing, which pursuing its quarry into Messer Stricca’s gardens, and there striking true, the ensuing struggle took place. Hearing the hawk’s cry, both he and his lady ran towards the garden balcony, in time to see, and were surprised at the skill and boldness of the bird in seizing and bringing down its game. Not in the least aware of the truth, the lady inquired of her husband to whom the bird belonged.

“ Mark the hawk,” replied Messer Stricca ; “ it does its work well ; it resembles its master, who is one of the handsomest and most accomplished young men in Sienna, and a very excellent young fellow, too ;—yes, it does well.”

“ And who may that be ? ” said his wife, with a careless air.

“ Who,” returned he, “ but the noble Galgano—the same, love, who just now passed by. I wished he would have come in to sup with us, but he would not. He is certainly one of the finest and best-tempered men I ever saw.” And so saying, he rose from the window, and they went to supper.

Galgano, in the meanwhile, having given his hawk the call, quietly pursued his way ; but the praises lavished upon him by her husband made an impression upon the lady’s mind such as the whole

of his previous solicitations had failed to produce. However strange, she dwelt upon them long and tenderly. It happened that about this very time Messer Stricca was chosen ambassador from the Siennese to the people of Perugia, and setting out in all haste, he was compelled to take a sudden leave of his lady.

I am sorry to have to observe that the moment the cavalcade was gone by, recalling the idea of her noble lover, the lady likewise despatched an embassy to our young friend, entreating him, after the example of her husband, to favour her with his company in the evening. No longer venturing to refuse he sent a grateful answer back that he would very willingly attend. And having heard tidings of Messer Stricca's departure for Perugia, he set out at a favourable hour in the evening, and speedily arrived at the house of the lady to whom he had been so long and so vainly attached.

Checking his steed in full career, he threw himself off, and the next moment found himself in her presence, falling at her feet and saluting her with the most respectful and graceful carriage. She took him joyously by the hand, bidding him a thousand tender welcomes, and setting before him the choicest fruits and refreshments of the season. Then inviting him to be seated, he was served with the greatest variety and splendour ; and more delicious than all, the bright lady herself presided there, no longer frowning and turning away when he began to breathe the story of his love and sufferings into her ear. Delighted and surprised beyond his proudest hopes, Galgano was profuse in his expressions of gratitude and regard, though he could not quite conceal his wonder at this happy and unexpected change ; entreating, at length, as a particular favour, that she would deign to acquaint him with its blessed cause.

" That will I do soon," replied the glowing beauty ; " I will tell you every word, and therefore did I send for you " ; and she looked into his face with a serene and pure yet somewhat mournful countenance.

" Indeed," returned her lover, a little perplexed, " words can never tell half of what I felt, dear lady, when I heard you had this morning sent for me, after having desired and followed you for so long a time in vain."

" Listen to me, and I will tell you, Galgano ; but first sit a little nearer to me, for, alas ! I love you. A few days ago, you know, you passed near our house when hawking, and my husband told me that he saw you, and invited you in to supper, but you would not come. At that moment your hawk sprang and pursued its prey, when seeing the noble bird make such a gallant fight, I inquired to whom it belonged, and my husband replied, ' To whom should it belong but to the most excellent young man in Sienna ' ; and that it did well to

resemble you, as he had never met a more pleasing and accomplished gentleman."

"Did he—did he say that?" interrupted her lover.

"He did indeed, and much more, praising you to me over and over; until hearing it, and knowing the tenderness you have long borne me, I could not resist the temptation of sending for you hither"; and, half blushes, half tears, she confessed that he was no longer indifferent to her, and that such was the occasion of it.

"Can the whole of this be true?" exclaimed Galgano.

"Alas! too true," she replied. "I know not how it is, but I wish he had not praised you so."

After struggling with himself a few moments, the unhappy lover withdrew his hand from hers, saying, "Now God forbid that I should do the least wrong to one who has so nobly expressed himself and who has ever shown so much kindness and courtesy to me."

Then suddenly rising, as with an effort, from his seat, he took a gentle farewell of the lady, not without some tears shed on both sides; both loving yet respecting each other. Never afterwards did this noble youth allude to the affair in the slightest way, but always treated Messer Stricca with the utmost regard and reverence during his acquaintance with the family.

SER GIOVANNI

BUCCILOLO AND HIS TUTOR

THERE were once two very intimate friends, both of the family of Savelli, in Rome, the name of one of whom was Bucciolo, of the other Pietro Paolo, both of good birth and easy circumstances. Expressing a mutual wish to study for a while together at Bologna, they took leave of their relatives and set out. One of them attached himself to the study of the civil, the other to that of the canon law ; and thus they continued to apply themselves for some length of time. But as you are aware that the subject of the Decretals takes a much narrower range than is embraced by the common law, so Bucciolo, who pursued the former, made greater progress than did Pietro Paolo, and having taken a licentiate's degree, he began to think of returning to Rome.

"You see, my dear fellow-student," he observed to his friend Paolo, "I am now a licentiate, and it is time for me to think of moving homewards."

"Nay, not so," replied his companion ; "I have to entreat you will not think of leaving me here this winter ; stay for me till spring and we can then return together. In the meanwhile you may pursue some other science, so that you need not lose any time."

To this Bucciolo at length consented, promising to await his relation's own good time. Having thus resolved, he had immediate recourse to his former tutor, informing him of his determination to bear his friend company a little longer, and entreating to be employed in some pleasant study to beguile the period during which he had to remain. The professor begged him to suggest something he would like, as he should be very happy to assist him in its attainment.

"My worthy tutor," replied Bucciolo, "I think I should like to learn the way in which one falls in love, and the best manner to begin."

"Oh, very good," cried the tutor, laughing, "you could have hit upon nothing better, for you must know that, if that be your object, I am a complete adept in the art. To lose no time, in the first place, go next Sunday morning to the Church of the Frati Minori, where all the ladies will be clustered together, and pay proper attention during

service, in order to discover if any one of them in particular happen to please you. When you have done this, keep your eye upon her after service, to see the way she takes to her residence, and then come back to me. And let this be the first lesson, first part, of that in which it is my intention to instruct you."

Bucciolo went accordingly, and taking his station the next Sunday in the church as he had been directed, his eyes, wandering in every direction except the proper one, were fixed upon all the pretty women in the place, and upon one in particular who pleased him above all the rest. She was far the most attractive and beautiful lady he could find; and on leaving the church Bucciolo took care to obey his master, and follow her until he had made himself acquainted with her residence. Nor was it long before the young lady began to perceive that the student was smitten with her; upon which, Bucciolo, returning to his master, acquainted him with what he had done:

"I have learned as much as you ordered me, and found somebody I like very well."

"So far good," cried the professor, not a little amused at the sort of science to which his pupil thus seriously devoted himself, "so far good; and now mind what I have next to say to you. Take care to walk two or three times a day very respectfully before her house, casting your eyes about you in such a way that no one catch you staring in her face; but look in a modest and becoming manner, so that she cannot fail to perceive and to be struck with it. And then return to me, and this, sir, will be the second lesson in this gay science."

So the scholar went, and promenaded with great discretion before the lady's door, who certainly observed that he appeared to be passing to and fro out of respect to one of the inhabitants. This attracted her attention, for which Bucciolo very discreetly expressed his gratitude both by looks and bows, which being as often returned, the scholar began to be aware that the lady liked him. Upon this he immediately went and informed the professor of all that had passed, who replied, "Come, you have done very well; I am hitherto quite satisfied. It is now time for you to find some way of speaking to her, which you may easily do by means of one of those gipsies who haunt the streets of Bologna crying ladies' veils, purses, and other rare articles to sell. Send word by her that you are the lady's most faithful, devoted servant, and that there is no one in the world you so much wish to please. In short, let her urge your suit, and take care to bring the answer to me as soon as you have received it; I will then tell you how you are to proceed."

Departing in all haste, he soon found a little old pedlar woman, quite perfect in her trade, to whom he said he should take it as a

particular favour if she would do one thing, for which he would reward her handsomely.

Upon this she declared her readiness to serve him in anything he pleased, "for you know," she continued, "it is my business to get money in every way I can."

Bucciolo gave her two florins, saying, "I wish you to go as far as the Via Maccarella for me to-day, where resides a young lady of the name of Giovanna, for whom I have the very highest regard. Pray tell her so, and recommend me to her most affectionately, so as to obtain for me her good grace by every means in your power. I entreat you to have my interest at heart, and to say such pretty things as she cannot refuse to hear."

"Oh," said the little old woman, "leave that to me, sir; I will not fail to say a good word for you at the proper time."

"Delay not," said Bucciolo, "but go now, and I will wait for you here"; and she set off immediately, taking a basket of her trinkets under her arm.

On approaching the place, she saw the lady before the door enjoying the open air, and curtsying to her very low, "Do I happen to have anything here you fancy?" she said, displaying her treasures. "Pray, take something, madam, whatever pleases you best."

Veils, stays, purses, and mirrors were now spread in the most tempting way before her eyes, as the old woman took her station at the lady's side. Out of all these, her attention appeared to be most attracted by a beautiful purse, which she observed, if she could afford, she should like to buy.

"Nay, madam, do not think anything about the price," exclaimed the little pedlar; "take anything you please, for they are all paid for, I assure you."

Surprised at hearing this, and observing the very respectful manner of the speaker, the lady replied, "Do you know what you are saying? what do you mean by that?"

The old creature, pretending now to be much affected, said, "Well, madam, if it must be so, I will tell you. It is very true that a young gentleman of the name of Bucciolo sent me hither, one who loves you better than all the world besides. There is nothing he would not do to please you, and indeed he appears so very wretched because he cannot speak to you, and he is so very good, that it is quite a pity. I think it will be the death of him; and then he is such a fine, such an elegant young man; the more is the pity."

On hearing this, the lady, blushing deeply, turned sharply round upon the little old hag, exclaiming, "Oh, you wicked little creature! were it not for the sake of my own reputation, I would give you such a lesson that you should remember it to the latest day of your life. A pretty story to come before decent people with! Are not you

ashamed of yourself to let such words come out of your mouth ? ”

Then seizing an iron bar that lay across the doorway, “ Ill betide you, little wretch,” she cried, as she brandished it ; “ if you ever return this way again, you may depend upon it you will never go back alive ! ”

The trembling old creature, quickly bundling up her pack, ran off, in dread of feeling that cruel weapon on her shoulders ; nor did she once think of stopping till she had reached the place where Signor Bucciole stood. Eagerly inquiring the news, and in what way she had prospered : “ Oh, very badly, very badly,” answered the little gipsy ; “ I never was in such a fright in all my life. Why, she will neither see nor listen to you, and if I had not run away, I should have felt the weight of her hand upon my shoulders. For my own part, I shall go there no more,” chinking the two florins ; “ and I would advise you to look to yourself how you proceed in such affairs in future.”

Poor Bucciole now became quite disconsolate, and returned in all haste to acquaint the professor with this unlucky result. But the tutor, not a whit cast down, consoled him, saying, “ Do not despair Bucciole ; a tree is not levelled at a single stroke, you know. I think you must have a repetition of your lesson to-night. So go and walk before her door as usual ; notice how she eyes you, and whether she appears angry or not ; and then come back again to me.”

He proceeded without delay to the lady’s house, who, the moment she perceived him, called her maid, giving her directions as follows : “ Quick, quick ! hasten after that young man—that is he ; and tell him from me that he must come and speak to me this evening without fail ; yes, without fail.”

The girl soon came up with Bucciole : “ My lady, sir, my lady Giovanna would be glad of the pleasure of your company this evening ; she would be very glad to speak to you.”

Greatly surprised at this, Bucciole replied, “ Tell your lady I shall be most happy to wait upon her ” ; and turning round, he set off once more to the professor, and reported the progress of the case.

But this time his master looked a little more serious, for, from some trivial circumstances put together, he began to entertain suspicions, as it really turned out, that the lady was no other than his own wife. So he rather anxiously inquired of Bucciole whether he intended to accept the invitation.

“ To be sure I do,” replied his pupil.

“ Then promise,” rejoined the professor, “ that you will come here before you set off.”

“ Certainly,” said Bucciole, “ I will ” ; and he took his leave.

Now, our hero was far from suspecting that the lady boasted so near a relationship to his beloved tutor, although the latter began to

feel rather uneasy as to the result, feeling certain twinges of jealousy by no means pleasant. For he passed most of his winter evenings at the college, where he gave lectures, and not unfrequently remained there for the night. "I should be sorry," thought he, "that this young gentleman were learning these things at my expense; and I must therefore know the real state of the case."

In the evening his pupil called again, saying, "Worthy sir, I am now ready to go."

"Well, go," replied the professor; "but be wise, Signor Bucciolo, be wise: think more than once what you are about."

"Trust me for that," replied the scholar, a little piqued; "I shall go well provided, and not walk like a fool into the mouth of danger unarmed."

And away he went, furnished with a good cuirass, a rapier, and a stiletto in his belt. He was no sooner on his way than the professor slipped out quietly after him, following him close at his heels, and truly he saw him stop at his own door, which, on a pretty smart tap being given, was opened in a moment, and the pupil was admitted by the lady herself. When the professor saw that it was indeed his own wife, he was quite overwhelmed, saying in a faint voice to himself, "Alas! I fear this young fellow has learned more than he confesses at my expense"; and making a cruel vow to revenge himself, he ran back to the college, where, arming himself with sword and knife, he hastened back in a terrible passion, with the intention of wreaking his vengeance on poor Bucciolo without delay.

Arriving at his own door, he gave a pretty smart knock, which the lady, sitting before the fire with Bucciolo, instantly recognised for her husband's. So taking hold of Bucciolo, she concealed him in all haste under a heap of damp clothes lying on a table near the window ready for ironing; and this done, she ran to the door, and inquired who was there. "Open, quick," returned the professor; "you vile woman, you shall soon know who I am."

On opening the door, she beheld him with a drawn sword, and exclaimed, "Oh, my dearest life! what means this?"

"You know very well," said he, "what it means; the villain is now in the house."

"Good heaven, what is it you say?" cried his wife; "are you gone out of your wits? Come and search the house, and if you find anybody, I will give you leave to kill me on the spot. What! do you think I should now begin to misconduct myself as I never before did, as none of my family ever did before? Beware lest the evil one should be tempting you, and suddenly depriving you of your senses, drive you to perdition."

But the professor, calling out for candles, began to search the house, from the cellars upwards, among the tubs and casks, in every

place but the right one, running his sword through the beds and under the beds, and into every inch of bedding, leaving no corner or crevice of the whole house untouched. The lady accompanied him with a candle in her hand, frequently interrupting him with, "Say your beads, say your beads, good sir; it is certain that the evil one is dealing with you; for were I half so bad as you esteem me, I would kill myself with my own hands. But I entreat you not to give way to his evil suggestions; oppose the adversary while you can."

Hearing these virtuous asseverations of his wife, and not being able to meet with any one after the strictest search, the professor began to think that he must indeed be possessed, and in a short time, extinguishing the lights, returned to his rooms. The lady, shutting the door upon him, called out to Bucciolo to come from his hiding-place, and stirring the fire, began to prepare a fine capon for supper, with some delicious wines and fruits. And thus they regaled themselves, highly entertained with each other; nor was it their least satisfaction that the professor had just left them, apparently convinced that they had learned nothing at his expense.

Proceeding the next morning to college, Bucciolo, without the least suspicion of the truth, informed his master that he had something for his ear which he was sure would make him laugh. "How, how so!" exclaimed the professor.

"Why," returned his pupil, "you must know that last night, just at the very time I was in the lady's house, who should come in but her husband, and in such a rage! He searched the whole house from top to bottom without being able to find me. I lay under a heap of newly-washed clothes, which were not half dry. In short, the lady played her part so well, that the poor gentleman forthwith took his leave, and we afterwards ate a fine fat capon for supper, and drank such wines, and with such a zest! It was really one of the pleasantest evenings I ever spent in my life. But I think I will go and take a nap, for I promised to return again this evening about the same hour."

"Then be sure before you go," said the professor, trembling with suppressed rage, "be sure to tell me when you set off."

"Oh, certainly," replied Bucciolo, and away he went. Such was now the unhappy tutor's condition as to render him incapable of delivering a single lecture during the whole day; and such his extreme vexation and desire to behold the evening, that he spent the whole time in arming himself cruelly with rapier, sword, and cuirass, dwelling upon deeds of blood. At the appointed hour came Bucciolo with the utmost innocence, saying, "My dear tutor, I am going now."

"Yes, go," replied the professor, "and come back again to-morrow morning, if you can, to tell me how you have fared."

"I intend to do so," said Bucciolo, and departed at a brisk pace for the house of the lady. Armed cap-à-pie, the professor ran out after him, keeping pretty close at his heels, with the intention of catching him just as he entered. But the lady being on the watch, opened the door so quickly for the pupil, that she shut it in the master's face, who began to knock and to call out with a furious noise. Extinguishing the candle in a moment, the lady placed Bucciolo behind the door, and throwing her arms round her husband's neck as he entered, motioned to her lover, while she thus held his enemy, to make his escape; and he, upon the husband rushing forwards, stepped out from behind the door unperceived.

She then began to scream as loud as she could, "Help, help! the professor is run mad! Will nobody help me?" for he was in an ungovernable rage, and she clung faster to him than before. The neighbours running to her assistance, and seeing the peaceable professor thus armed with all these deadly weapons, and his wife crying out, "Help, for the love of Heaven; too much study hath driven him mad!" they really believed such to be the fact.

"Come, good master," they said, "what is all this? Try to compose yourself; nay, do not struggle so hard, but let us help you to your couch."

"How can I rest, think you?" he replied, "while this wicked woman harbours paramours in my house? I saw him come in with my own eyes."

"Wretch that I am," cried his wife, "inquire of all my friends and neighbours whether any one of them ever saw anything the least unbecoming in my conduct."

The whole party, with one voice, entreated the master to lay such thoughts aside, for that there was not a better lady breathing, nor one who set a higher value upon her reputation. "But how can that be," said the tutor, "when I saw him enter the house with my own eyes? and he is in it now."

In the meanwhile the lady's two brothers arrived, when she began to weep bitterly, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear brothers! my poor husband is gone mad, quite mad; and he even says there is a man in the house! I believe he would kill me if he could; but you know me too well to listen a moment to such a story"; and she continued to weep.

The brothers forthwith accosted the professor in no very gentle terms. "We are surprised, we are shocked, sir, to find that you dare bestow such epithets on our sister; what can have led you, after living so amicably together, to bring these charges against her now?"

"I can only tell you," replied the enraged professor, "that there is a man in the house; I saw him."

"Then come and let us find him ; show him to us, for we will sift this matter to the bottom," retorted the incensed brothers. "Show us the man, and we will then punish her in such a way as will satisfy you !"

One of them taking his sister aside, said, "First tell me, have you really got any one hidden in the house ? Tell the truth."

"Heavens !" cried his sister ; "I tell you I would rather suffer death. Should I be the first to bring a scandal on our house ? I wonder you are not ashamed to mention such a thing."

Rejoiced to hear this, the brothers, directed by the professor, immediately commenced a search. Half frantic, he led them directly to the great bundle of linen, which he pierced through and through with his sword, firmly believing he was killing Bucciole all the while, taunting him at the same time at every blow.

"There ! I told you," cried his wife, "he was quite mad ; to think of destroying his own property thus ! It is plain he did not help to get them up," she continued, whimpering ; "all my best clothes."

Having now sought everywhere in vain, one of the brothers observed, "He is indeed mad" ; to which the other agreed, while he again attacked the professor in the bitterest terms. "You have carried things too far, sir ; your conduct to our sister is shameful, nothing but insanity can excuse it."

Vexed enough before, the professor upon this flew into a violent passion, and brandished his naked sword in such a way that the others were obliged to use their sticks, which they did so very effectually, that, after breaking them over his back, they chained him down like a madman upon the floor, declaring he had lost his wits by excessive study ; and taking possession of his house, they remained with their sister the whole night. The next morning they sent for a physician, who ordered a couch to be placed as near as possible to the fire ; that no one should be allowed to speak or reply to the patient ; and that he should be strictly dieted until he recovered his wits ; and this regimen was diligently enforced.

A report immediately spread throughout Bologna that the good professor had become insane, which caused very general regret, his friends observing to each other, "It is indeed a bad business, but I suspected yesterday how it was : he could scarcely get a word out as he was delivering his lecture ; did you perceive ?"

"Yes, I saw him change colour, poor fellow" ; and everywhere, by everybody, it was decided that the professor was mad.

In this situation numbers of his scholars went to see him, and among the rest Bucciole, knowing nothing of what had passed, agreed to accompany them to the college, desirous of acquainting his master with his last night's exploit. What was his surprise to learn that he had actually taken leave of his senses ; and being

directed, on leaving the college, to the professor's house, he was almost panic-struck on approaching the place, beginning to comprehend the whole affair.

Yet, in order that no one might be led to suspect the real truth, he walked into the house along with the rest, and on reaching a certain apartment which he knew, he beheld his poor tutor, almost beaten to a mummy, and chained down upon his bed close to the fire. His pupils were standing round condoling with him and lamenting his piteous case. At length it came to Bucciolo's turn to say something to him, which he did as follows : " My dear master, I am as truly concerned for you as if you were my own father ; and if there is anything in which I can be of use to you, command me as your own son."

To this the poor professor only replied, " No, Bucciolo ; depart in peace, my pupil, depart, for you have learned much, very much, at my expense."

Here his wife interrupted him : " You see how he wanders ; heed not what he says ; pay no attention to him, Signor."

Bucciolo, however, prepared to depart, and taking a hasty leave of the professor, he ran to the lodgings of his relation, Pietro Paolo, saying, " Fare you well ! God bless you, my friend ! I must away to Rome ; for I have lately learned so much at other people's expense that I am going home " ; and he hurried away, and fortunately arrived safely at Rome.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INDIAN

To the Syndics of the UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE
For permission to reprint "The Monkey and the
Queen's Jewels" and "The Tale of the Princess
Sambula" from *The Jataka, or Stories of the Buddha's
Former Births*, translated by H. T. Francis, M.A.

PETRONIUS

To Mr. WILLIAM HEINEMANN, London.
For permission to use the story "The Widow of
Ephesus" from the *Satyricon* of Petronius, translated
by Michael Heseltine in the Loeb Classical Library,
of which Mr. Heinemann is the English publisher

CHINESE

To Dr. H. A. GILES, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge
University.
For his courtesy in furnishing the translations of
"The Peach-blossom Fountain" and "The Lute-
Girl's Lament" from his *Gems of Chinese Literature*.

MEDIAEVAL

To MESSRS. GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN, LTD., London.
For permission to reprint the translation of "The
Tale of King Coustans" from *Old French Romances*,
copyright of which belongs to them.

II

ITALIAN

THE
Masterpiece Library
of Short Stories

*The Thousand Best Complete
Tales of all Times and
all Countries*

Selected by

AN INTERNATIONAL BOARD
OF EMINENT CRITICS

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, LL.D.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

Clement Shorter

George Saintsbury, LL.D.

Richard le Gallienne

Brander Matthews, Litt.D.

Sir Frederick Wedmore

Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B., LL.D.

W. P. Trent, LL.D.

Carl Van Doren

Thomas Seecombe

Edited by

Sir J. A. Hammerton

II. ITALIAN

LONDON

THE EDUCATIONAL BOOK COMPANY LIMITED

Contents of Volume II

	PAGE
Introductory Essay <i>Edward Wright</i>	391
LIX. Friends in Love <i>Masuccio of Salerno</i>	403
LX. Giacomo Pinto and the Conjuror " "	407
LXI. Maestro Niccolo and the Pig <i>Gio Sabadino</i>	413
LXII. Belphagor <i>Giovanni Brevio</i>	417
LXIII. King Mansor and the Fisherman <i>Matteo Bandello</i>	426
LXIV. The Mischievous Ape " "	429
LXV. The Story of Romeo and Juliet. <i>Luigi da Porto</i>	433
LXVI. The Surprising Adventures of Messer Niccolo <i>Agnolo Firenzuola</i>	451
LXVII. The Fortunes of Gallio and Cardina <i>Gentile Sermini</i>	460
LXVIII. Why Gabriello Re-married his Wife <i>Anton-Francesco Grazzini</i>	468
LXIX. The Story of Desdemona <i>Giovambattista Giraldu</i> <i>Cinthio</i>	477
LXX. Filargiro the Miser " "	488
LXXI. Faustino and the Meddlesome Tradesman <i>Girolamo Parabosco</i>	492
LXXII. The Heroism of Fiordespina <i>Pietro Fortini</i>	497
LXXIII. San Giovanni the Younger <i>Anton-Francesco Domi</i>	502
LXXIV. The Discomfited Fops <i>Francesco Sansovino</i>	505
LXXV. Timocrates and Arsinoe <i>Sebashano Erizzo</i>	508
LXXVI. The Love Affairs of the Grand Duchess <i>Celso Malespini</i>	511
LXXVII. The Transformation " "	517
LXXVIII. Ippolito and Gangenova <i>Scipione Bargagli</i>	522
LXXIX. Andrigetto the Impenitent <i>Giovan-Francesco Stra-</i> <i>parola</i>	532
LXXX. The Astrologer and the Ass <i>Ortensio Lando</i>	537
LXXXI. Evil for Evil " "	541

	PAGE
LXXXII. The Grape Stealers <i>Count Carlo Gozzi</i> . .	543
LXXXIII. The Monk and the Woman . . <i>Giovanni Bottari</i> . .	547
LXXXIV. Friar Timothy and the Woodman <i>Michele Colombo</i> . .	556
LXXXV. It Snows <i>Enrico Castelnuovo</i> . .	564
LXXXVI. The Lost Letter " " . .	577
LXXXVII. The Theorem of Pythagoras . . " " . .	586
LXXXVIII. The Rival Earthquakes . . <i>Luigi Capuana</i> . .	592
LXXXIX. Quacquare " " . .	600
xc. Cavalleria Rusticana . . . <i>Giovanni Verga</i> . .	609
xci. The She-Wolf " " . .	615
xcii. The War of the Saints . . . " " . .	620
xciii. The Silver Crucifix . . . <i>Antonio Fogazzaro</i> . .	628
xciv. Doctor Phoebus <i>Mario Pratesi</i> . .	636
xcv. The Little Sardinian Drummer . <i>Edmondo de Amicis</i> . .	651
xcvi. A Great Day " " . .	657
xcvii. San Pantaleone <i>Gabriele d'Annunzio</i> . .	669
xcviii. Mastro Peppe's Magic . . . " " . .	678
xcix. The End of Candia " " . .	687
c. Separation <i>Salvatore Farina</i> . .	696
ci. An Intervention <i>Matilde Serao</i> . .	706
cii. Two Men and a Woman . . <i>Grazia Deledda</i> . .	719
ciii. For the Saving of Souls . . <i>Roberto Bracco</i> . .	736
civ. A Survivor <i>Giulio de Frenzi</i> . .	740
cv. The Merry Company . . . <i>Luciano Zuccoli</i> . .	748



THE ITALIAN STORY-TELLERS

OF all writers of short stories, the Italians were the most fertile, the most sustained in creative impulse, and, from many points of view, the most interesting. For three and a half centuries their work was the image of the life around them, of its virtues and perversities, its stately splendours, its sombre tragedies, and its loose gaieties. No other school of writers in modern Europe has used the art of the short story for so long a period or with so varied a point of view. Every change in the manners and character of the Italian people, from the age of Dante to the age of the Medicı Popes, is vividly mirrored in the little novels of Italy.

At the present time, the Italians scarcely rank among the supreme novelists of Europe. In both the novel and the short story their modern writers are surpassed by those of the French, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Germanic peoples. This is part of the price the Italians have to pay for that marvellous early flowering of their national genius which made their forefathers for three hundred years the leaders in nearly every field of civilisation. There are many signs that the creative spirit of the Italian race is again alert and preparing for high achievements. A few veritable masterpieces of the art of the story-teller in the latter part of this volume show what the modern Italian can do when he resumes the old traditions of his nation and breathes into them the new life of his own era. But on the whole, the work of the Italians of the Renaissance is more important at the present time than the work

of the later men. For the older writers have both a high historic interest and an absolute intrinsic literary value, and on these grounds they rank above Poe and *Merimée*, Maupassant and Kipling, as well as above Verga and D'Annunzio.

Much has been added to the art of the short story since the old Italians practised it. Its structure has become clearer, its style has been refined, the dramatic movement has been quickened by skilful foreshortenings of the plot, and the more dexterous use of dialogue. But these improvements of detail are apt to be overvalued by the modern writer. By their grasp of the large essentials of their art, men like Boccaccio and Masuccio, Bandello and Giraldi, are assured of immortality. They are great story-tellers because they tell great stories, things that rank among the most moving creations in the literature of the world. They relate these things in a simple, conversational tone, their minds bent on the deep human interest of the story, just as the mind of a man would be who had seen some strangely comical or fiercely tragical scene that he wished to describe to a circle of friends. There is little art of preparing surprises or making telling points, and none of the tricks that every clever magazine-story writer now employs. The tale is the thing, and the Italian novelist is eager to pour it out and let it make its own impression. His is a natural way of telling a story, and it has special qualities which may bring it again into favour. Its freedom from all artifice more than compensates for the leisureliness of its manner.

And though the manner of the Italian novelists undergoes but little change for three centuries, there is a deep variety in the spirit of their stories. We have seen in the first volume the lovely qualities of the work of Boccaccio: a delightful old-world air of courtesy and grace comes into his tales from the fine chivalric life of Florence in the days of her freedom and power. Very little of the traditions of chivalry persists in the work of the story-tellers of the later Renaissance. The old republican spirit, with its restraint that made for intensity, and its orderliness of life that made for general strength, gave way to the frenzied ambitions, the greed and the selfishness of an age of tyranny. The townspeople were usually too self-seeking to maintain any form of democratic government, and too fond of money-making to undertake military service: in so many places they fell under the despotic power of some freebooter or some rich nobleman who invested his money in a most profitable manner in the hiring of large troops of mercenaries.

MASUCCIO OF SALERNO

A fiercer, wilder, and more cruel strain of feeling arose. The result was that the tales of Italy, which mirrored this change in the national

life, became either very licentious or full of murders, treacheries, and savage atrocities. Masuccio, born about 1415 at Salerno, is the first great writer of this new school. He depicts the manners of the court of Naples, which was one of the most luxurious in the world. He was a Secretary of State, and his tales were written as a pastime, after having been told by word of mouth to the great lords and high ladies of Naples and Milan. The common people furnish only matter of laughter to the court chronicler, and even in the amusing tale of "Giacomo Pinto and the Conjuror" some young noble gentlemen of Salerno play the principal part. In "Friends in Love" he recaptures somewhat of the fine spirit of chivalry. Masuccio is a very original writer. He sees life with his own eyes, and instead of trying to imitate the diction of Boccaccio, he uses his native forms of speech with its popular idioms. From a purely literary point of view he is most famous as the creator of the first form of the story of Romeo and Juliet. In his tale the names are different, and the scene is placed at Siena instead of Verona: but the main action of the story is found in his work.

GIO SABADINO

Many of the story-tellers of this period were courtiers who wrote simply for the amusement of their circle of princes, ladies, and friends. Story-telling was one of the chief pleasures of the age. Everybody took a hand in it, and those who pleased most were warmly encouraged, and often received some government position with a view to attaching them more closely to the ruling families. Gio Sabadino of the Arienti, the successor to Masuccio, was born in Bologna about 1450, and at the age of twenty-seven he accompanied one of the lords of his city to the baths of Porretta. There, in the pleasant society of fine ladies and brilliant courtiers, he related a bunch of tales in the manner of Boccaccio. No doubt as a reward for his success in entertaining his noble companions, he was made next year one of the magistrates of Bologna. He afterwards became a favourite at the splendid court of the Duke of Ferrara, and acted as his diplomatic agent. Thus, indirectly, a gift for story-telling was as profitable a talent then as it is now. Most of the tales of Sabadino are light in tone, like his merry study of university life, "Maestro Niccolo and the Pig." He was on a holiday when he composed them.

GIOVANNI BREVIO

Giovanni Brevio of Venice wrote with more seriousness. He was a priest of humble birth, who won his way to the front by great learning

as a professor of canonical law, and his biographer states he was made a bishop. He has only left six tales, but one of them, "Belpagor," is a jewel of literature. There is some doubt whether Brevio or Machiavelli is the original author of this famous satire against women; but the probability is that the priest was entitled to include it among his works. His other stories are not so distinguished for their invention. They are studies of actual life, in which a characteristically dubious view is taken of feminine character.

MATTEO BANDELLO

To another ecclesiastic, Bishop Bandello, our Elizabethan playwrights are deeply indebted. The worthy bishop was one of the full-blooded children of the Italian Renaissance, with a keen zest for life. His vivid sketches of the free, passionate energies of the Italians of the sixteenth century stirred the more sluggish temperament of our writers, and by opening out to them the vast and terrible possibilities of human existence, stimulated their imaginations in a powerful way. His most characteristic works, such as the tales of "Hamlet," the "Countess of Celant," and "The Duchess of Malfi," are novels rather than short stories. So we must turn to his lighter, briefer tales—like "King Mansor and the Fisherman" and "The Mischievous Ape"—to get examples of his art suitable for our purpose. Born at Castelnovo in Lombardy, and made bishop of Agen in France by Francis I, Bandello ranks second only to Boccaccio as a master of the art of narration; as an explorer of the dark recesses of the human heart, he is equal to the Florentine.

LUIGI DA PORTO

Bandello was not, however, always original, and one of the finest of his tales is only a paraphrase of the work of a soldier, Luigi da Porto. Da Porto was a captain of light horse in the service of Venice, and being seriously wounded in the neck in one of the battles of the republic, he was compelled to retire from his military career. A gallant example of the gentleman adventurer of the Renaissance, he was intimate with the chief wits and scholars of his day, and rivalled them in his classical studies. He is said to have written several tales, but they are all lost except one. This, however, is sufficient to make him for ever famous. It is so simple in style, so sober in details, so happy in its moving turns, so original in subject! It is the greatest of all love stories—"Romeo e Giulietta!" Da Porto says he heard it from one of his archers—"a

man of fifty years, a companionable fellow and a great talker, like all the people of Verona." We have seen that Masuccio had a similar story to tell in a more popular manner, but he attributed it to a family in Siena, dating the event about 1476. It is hard to say if there is any historic fact in the later tale of the lovers of Verona, though it is remarkable that even in the days of Shakespeare the tomb of Romeo and Juliet was shown to strangers who visited the town.

AGNOLO FIRENZUOLA

A monk of Vallombrosa is the next figure in the motley, glittering pageant of Italian fiction. But as a man of religious life, Agnolo Firenzuola is much less estimable than as a wit and a classical scholar. He was a graceless, brilliant scamp who won rich abbeys by the most profane of arts. One of his chief admirers, the second Medici Pope, was compelled to annul his religious vows because of his scandalous misconduct. But in spite of his defects of character, Firenzuola was an excellent writer. A Florentine by race, he had a pure, exquisite style, often applied to subjects that were neither pure nor exquisite. His distinctive merit as a novelist resides in his talent for observation, especially in regard to the life of the working classes of Florence. In "The Surprising Adventures of Messer Niccolo" he touches on romance, and outlines an interesting plot that has been developed by many modern novelists.

PIETRO FORTINI—GENTILE SERMINI

One of Firenzuola's stories is taken from Pietro Fortini, an officer of the republican government of Siena, who, retiring into the country when his city lost its freedom, took to composing tales. Most of them are extremely light, but the old republican is finely inspired in his story of "The Heroism of Fiordesquina." His portrait of the savage, unjust tyrant is done with passion, and his heroine shines like the Lucretia of ancient Rome. Gentile Sermini is another novelist of Siena in the sixteenth century, but he had the strange ambition to live two hundred years before he was born. He dated his work back to the age of Boccaccio, and forged a correspondence with that writer, in which he pretended he was contemporary with him, and he filled his tales with historic allusions to show they had been written about 1349. He was content to forego fame in his lifetime, in the hope of ranking after death with the early Florentines. But the critics have discovered his tricks,

and his pleasant tale of "The Fortunes of Gallio and Cardina" is now regarded as a late variation of an old theme.

GRAZZINI—GIRALDI CINTHIO

Anton-Francesco Grazzini, born in Florence in 1503, was a son of the Athens of Italy, in the hour of its sunset splendour. He was an apothecary with a passion for literature, and all his writings are marked by the lively grace and charming ease seen in his amusing account of "Why Gabriello Re-married his Wife." Florentine writers in the tragic days of their republic felt nothing of the agony of their great artists like Michelangelo. It was from northern Italy that the dramas of high passion came, and a professor of philosophy at Ferrara, Giovambattista Giraldi, surnamed by his admirers Cinthio, was one of the novelists who handed on the torch to Shakespeare. His "Story of Desdemona" is a magnificent piece of work, though written in rather a heavy style. He also provided Shakespeare with the plot of "Measure for Measure," and Beaumont and Fletcher and Dryden found in his stories the subject-matter for some notable tragedies.

PARABOSCO—DONI—SANSOVINO—ERIZZO

Girolamo Parabosco was another writer of the northern school, with a somewhat heavy style but a lively imagination. He was a very versatile man—organist at Saint Mark at Venice, musical composer, playwright, poet and novelist. Most of his tales are in a humorous vein, like "Faustino and the Meddlesome Tradesman." Humour is also the quality of Anton-Francesco Doni, an unfrocked priest and wandering musician, who settled at Venice and lived by his wits. He has a happy verve and a vivacious turn for satire. Francesco Sansovino is, as his "Discomfited Fops" shows, a writer with a similar gift for comedy. The son of a famous sculptor, he was born at Rome, and after trying to make a living at the law, he too settled at Venice and became a voluminous writer. Then comes a grave senator of Venice, Sebastiano Erizzo, with a dignified way of writing that he sometimes applied to discourses on government and sometimes to historical romances, of which "Timocrates and Arsinoe" is a good example.

ORTENSIO LANDO

By the middle of the sixteenth century the Italian short story entered on its decline. Novelists were as numerous as ever, and their works

were very popular ; but their power of invention and their freshness of vision were sadly impaired. They drew largely on their predecessors for their plots, and even turned to mediæval France for the matter of their stories. Ortensio Lando, for instance, had one eye on the life of his time and another on the story-books of the past. His "Astrologer and the Ass" is an amusing sketch of the superstitions of his countrymen : but his shortest and most famous story, "Evil for Evil," is taken from an old French poet and dressed up in Tuscan speech. But it deserves a place in our collection, for it is certainly one of the most famous stories in the world, and Lando tells it even better than the Frenchman.

MALESPINI—BARGAGLI—STRAPAROLA

Celio Malespini, a Venetian nobleman of brilliant personality and revengeful character, gets more life and passion into his work than most of his contemporaries. His tale of "The Love Affairs of the Grand Duchess" is really a scandalous thing ; it attacks a lady who was very kind to him, but the truth and vigour of this portrait of the most famous of the Grand Duchesses of Tuscany make it a piece of vivid art. "The Transformation" is another study from the life with a fine comic turn in it. Scipione Bargagli of Siena and Giovan-Francesco Straparola form, with Malespini, the last of the great Italian novelists. Bargagli, some of his admirers say, deserves to be placed beside Boccaccio. His curious and delicate qualities of style, however, are necessarily lost in translation ; and though his story of "Ippolito and Gangenova" is an admirable piece of narrative, it scarcely ranks with the finest works of the earlier master. To English readers he has the special interest of having excited the admiration of Keats. Straparola, however, has won greater attention from *Mohère* and other French writers. He wrote some of the most popular of our current fairy-tales, and in his tale of "Andrighetto the Impenitent" he gives an unforgettable study of a typical neo-pagan of the Renaissance at the point of death. The sombre courage of the villain is magnificent : he was a true son of his wild age.

BOTTARI—GOZZI—MICHELE COLOMBO

It was men of this sort who exhausted the energies of the Italian race, and reduced Italy for some centuries to a mere geographical expression. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Italians contributed very little of importance to the art of fiction. They became largely

dependent on France and England for literary ideas, and it was not until the influence of Sir Walter Scott told on Manzoni in the nineteenth century that the art of prose narrative revived in Italy. In the meantime the good Bishop Giovanni Bottari, in the seventeenth century, tried to be a religious Boccaccio, and wrote that gem of humour, conscious or unconscious, which we have here entitled "The Monk and the Woman." In the next generation we have a little comedy of "The Grape Stealers" from Count Carlo Gozzi—a brilliant improviser of pantomimes and fairy plays. The last flicker of the old Italian tale is the "Friar Timothy and the Woodman" by an obscure eighteenth-century writer, Michele Colombo. This was good enough for a French wit, Piron, to borrow; and slight though it is, it marks the end of a great creative period in the Italian art of story-telling.

LUIGI CAPUANA—ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

There is a break of more than a hundred years between Colombo, the last of the old school, and Luigi Capuana, the first of the modern school of Italian novelists. Capuana is a Sicilian, born at Mineo in 1839. He is a realist, inspired by the example of Zola, but his Italian sense of beauty preserves him from the gross faults of the French writer, and in "Quacquarà" and "The Rival Earthquakes" he shows a keen sense of humour as well as a faculty of minute observation that discovers new things in the commonplaces of life. His contemporary, Enrico Castelnuovo, was born in Florence in 1839, and has rather more lightness and grace of style, as becomes a native of the most artistic province of Italy. The study of life's little ironies attracts him, and his three tales, "It Snows," "The Lost Letter" and "The Theorem of Pythagoras," have somewhat of the strength of Thomas Hardy and the charm of Daudet.

GIOVANNI VERGA—ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

But the modern master of the Italian *conte* is the Sicilian, Giovanni Verga, born at Catania in 1840. His "Cavalleria Rusticana" is probably the best-known short story in the modern world. And this is not merely due to its success in operatic form: the original tale of Sicilian peasant life, with its strange mingling of the savage and the chivalric spirit, is one of the high things in modern literature. And quite as fine in a different way is the sombre, ghastly "She-Wolf." Maupassant never touched so tragic a depth in the human soul. Then

we have the peculiar inimitable humour of "The War of the Saints," a remarkable study of the ways and thoughts of the Italian peasant. Some critics are inclined to place the northern Italian, Antonio Fogazzaro, by the side of Verga as a short-story writer. Certainly the fine suggestive art of the moving tale of "The Silver Crucifix" shows that Fogazzaro is as good at miniatures of literature as at large frescoes. But on the whole he might be described as the best modern novelist in Italy, while Verga is the best short-story writer.

MARIO PRATESI

Mario Pratesi is a Tuscan writer, born in 1842, and as his ironic sketch of "Doctor Phœbus" indicates, he takes a middle way between the fierce realism of Verga and the sympathetic interpretation of life of Fogazzaro. He has one of the best-balanced minds of his age, with an intensity of vision and force of emotion that make him the most sympathetic of ironists.

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

There is less depth in the brilliant soldier-writer, Edmondo de Amicis, who, born in 1846 on the Genoa coast, spent the early part of his life in fighting the Austrians and in editing a military periodical. Amicis writes like a first-rate cavalry officer, with dash and brilliance and fervour. His "Little Sardinian Drummer" is an exciting battle-piece—all movement, smoke, stabbing flame, and high-hearted courage. And in "A Great Day" he gives a striking study of the frame of mind of some Italians of the better class during the heroic struggle for national independence. He died in 1908.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO—FARINA

With Gabriele d'Annunzio, born eighteen years after gallant Amicis, we come to the most problematic figure in modern literature. Our representative selection of his shorter works consists of "San Pantaleone," that reminds one of Verga's story of the rival Saints; and "Mastro Peppe's Magic," that seems to be an amusing variation on one of the favourite comic themes of the old Italian novelists. Then "The End of Candia" has clearly been suggested by Maupassant's "A Piece of String." It is the same with many of d'Annunzio's long novels: the theme, the treatment, and even the phrases used, can at

times be traced to other writers. What is original in d'Annunzio is his rhetoric: he uses words as a musician uses sounds, and expresses his individuality by an iridescent torrent of language at high pressure. Salvatore Farina, who was born in the same year as Amicis, is not so well known a writer, but as his charming tale of "Separation" proves, he has at least a personal way of looking at life, and a quiet humorous turn of mind. Humour is a great antiseptic, and if d'Annunzio had a little of it he would not be so strangely troubled by his maladies of the soul.

MATILDE SERAO

Matilde Serao was the first woman novelist to rise into fame in Italy. She was born in Greece in 1856, and though she is an Italian on her father's side, she never seems to have mastered completely the Italian language. But she has a sort of slovenly strength of expression that carries her through all difficulties, and as is seen in her tale, "An Intervention," she writes with great spirit and with a large knowledge of human nature. She has been deeply influenced by Fogazzaro.

GRAZIA DELEDDA

Grazia Deledda, born in Sardinia in 1872, is a woman novelist of a higher order than Signora Serao. She has the great classic qualities—simplicity, freshness, and that fine restraint that leads the small mind into aridity, and the great mind into intensity of effects. Her "Two Men and a Woman" is an excellent example of her genius. Her strong, simple islanders, with their impressionable passionate nature, are drawn by her with a woman's insight and the firm touch of an original artist.

ROBERTO BRACCO—GIULIO DE FRENZI—LUCIANO ZÜCCOLI

Roberto Bracco likes more complexity of character. He belongs to the ironic school, and his vivid little tale, "For the Saving of Souls," must not be taken too seriously. The dying poet will not die, and the pretty little nun will not run away with him. It is a charming comedy of make-believe. In Giulio de Frenzi's "A Survivor" we have another amusing study of the type of the young Italian who died about ten years ago. He was a healthy, vigorous fellow who fancied that he and his race were in a sad state of decline. He tried to look interestingly

ill, and sometimes drank absinthe with the idea of tasting the fatal joys of decadence. But this French fashion of thought has been blown away by the new school of the Futurists, and "A Survivor" is now probably eating beefsteaks in the English style, and practising some system of physical culture. So we end in "Merry Company" with Luciano Zùccoli, who guides us through the slums of Milan. It is scarcely a merry tale, this study of the low life of a modern Italian city, but the art with which it is written is extraordinary. There is more life rammed into this short story than is found in most long novels.

E. W.

MASUCCIO OF SALERNO

1415

FRIENDS IN LOVE

THIS incident occurred during the late campaign in Romagna, at a time when both parties were compelled to abandon military operations, and retire into winter quarters, owing to the severity of the season. One of the celebrated commanders, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, found it requisite to occupy the Pisanese territories, whither he led his fine Arragonese army, and cantoned it among the towns and castles in the vicinity. According to the rules of war, as well as to further the interests of the League, he then proceeded to a personal inspection of several of the noblest cities and fortifications of Italy. Being everywhere received with marks of triumph and distinction, it happened that, in passing through one of these cities, he was so much pleased with its appearance and the acclamations of the inhabitants, that he resolved to sojourn there for some time.

In the tournaments and festivals which distinguished this period, one of the Duke's favourite friends, of high birth and rare endowments, whose name was Marino Caracciuolo, bore no insignificant share. Gallantly riding at the head of his companions through the city, he chanced, among the beautiful faces that looked forth that day, to cast his eyes on one whose youthful charms captivated his attention far beyond all the others. As he passed on, her ideas still occupied his fancy, insomuch that he scarcely knew which road to take in order to find his way back. Frequently repairing, however, to the same spot, he so earnestly watched and followed her, that he attracted her attention, and at length prevailed upon her to return his favourable regards.

Marino was overjoyed when he discovered that she began to reward his passion. Resolved to avail himself of every occasion to promote his suit, among other means he announced a grand ball to be given in honour of his distinguished chief. Nearly all the ladies of the place were invited, and among these he had the delight of beholding the fascinating maiden, in honour of whose attractions the entertainment was really given.

Nor was the Duke himself less struck with her ; and quite uncon-

scious of his friend's attachment, he soon became so far enslaved by the surpassing beauty of her person and her manners, as to resolve upon obtaining her love at any price. The young lady, who had never before beheld him, though she had more than once heard him highly commended for all the best and noblest qualities befitting a Prince, was surprised to find that in magnanimity, courtesy, and heroic beauty, the reality so far outstripped the good report. She gazed upon him as the model of grace and noble manners ; and, mingled with the highest admiration, she offered up vows in her secret heart for his happiness and good fortune.

Nor was it long before the Duke perceived the impression he had made, and employed the evening so well, that before he took leave of her they became perfectly aware of the feelings which they mutually entertained. After particular inquiries into her rank and character, these feelings soon ripened on both sides into the warmest passion, and, being introduced into her society by means of the richest bribes and presents, the Prince proceeded in his designs, scarcely doubting of ultimate success. In the meanwhile, the lady not only discountenanced Marino's visits, but everywhere treated him with the utmost indifference and scorn, which, contrasted with her previous kindness, threw the unfortunate lover into such a fit of jealousy and despair, that, giving rein to his passion, he abandoned his military duties and refused the society of his friends.

Struck with this sudden change, the Duke frequently questioned him as to its cause, but could obtain no satisfactory answer, until, imagining that he had now the object of his pursuit in his power, he, as usual on such occasions, ordered his friend Marino into his presence, observing,

" Though I find you are still unwilling to acquaint me with the real cause of your unhappiness, I shall nevertheless continue, as before, to confide to you every secret of my breast. As a proof of which, learn that I am at this time engaged, within a few hours, to a beautiful young lady whom I trust I may then call my own. I entreat you, therefore, no less from affection than from duty, to wear a less lugubrious face, and either inform me what is the matter with you, or show a little more of your former cheerfulness. I shall not half enjoy my triumph if you do not accompany me ; so come, my friend, and protect me in this perilous enterprise, on which I should be unwilling to enter without your assistance."

Quite overpowered with these words, Marino, regretting that he had so long and so ungratefully concealed his passion from his best friend and master, related the whole affair, not without great emotion pronouncing the lady's name. The Duke listened to him with equal surprise and pain, considering within himself the strength of his friend's attachment, who stood before him overpowered with

remorse and grief. Then, consulting his own duties and his dignity, and conceiving that his more exalted station demanded the exertion of a superior degree of generosity, he determined without the least hesitation to prefer a lover's happiness to his own unbridled will.

"I doubt not you will do me the justice to believe, my dear Marino," said the Duke, "that I never took so much real pleasure in anything as in sharing my fortune with my friends. At least you shall now be convinced of it; for though I declare to you that I am passionately attached to this very lady, whom this evening I had prevailed upon to receive me to her arms, I shall not swerve from the line of conduct I have hitherto observed. I withdraw my claim, however much I may feel, for I cannot behold your affliction; so cheer up, my dear friend, and prepare to come along with me. Nay, no resistance; for I am resolved that before long you shall call our beloved girl your own. I have been much to blame, but you must forgive me, Marino, since I did not know that you loved her first. She is virtuous; we have only to get a priest, and she shall make you happy."

On hearing this generous offer, Marino expressed the utmost gratitude, declaring at the same time that he had rather die than think of interfering with any engagements which his Highness had thought it advisable to make.

"No apologies are necessary," replied the Duke, smiling; "and as I have said it, so it shall be"; and, taking his friend's arm, the Duke led him to the lady's house.

Leaving a few of their followers, for further security, near, they were introduced into the presence of the woman they loved, who received the Duke, advancing first, with unfeigned delight. Although she recognised her former admirer, she bestowed no further notice upon him than if he had been a stranger accompanying his master to receive his orders. But the noble Duke, introducing him to her with a smile, and taking her hand in the most affectionate manner, thus addressed her:

"I entreat you, my dear lady, by the true love I bear you, not to be offended with what I am about to say, because I would only have you so far listen to my request as it is honest and of good report. Nor can you give me a stronger proof of your high regard for me than by acceding to it.

"In my last interview with my royal father, before setting out on the present campaign, among other wise precepts, he most particularly insisted on the necessity of prudence in regard to my allowing myself to be surprised or taken captive in the ambush of a lady's eyes, citing many famous examples of the bad effects of worshipping so tyrannical a deity as Love. And though I am inexpressibly grateful, and passionately attached to you, yet when

I consider the late advice and injunctions of the King, the sorrow my love would entail upon you, and the sufferings of this my faithful friend and servant, whom nearest of all my followers I regard, it becomes my duty to inform you that he is deeply and desperately in love with you, and every way most deserving of your hand. But we are both yours ; it is for you to decide ; deal with us as you please " : and drawing his breath after this painful effort, the Prince remained silent.

Great indeed was the surprise and shock to the feelings of the lady, but, being discreet and virtuous, although in this instance she had been somewhat carried away, she resolved to emulate the generosity of the noble Duke, and making a virtue of necessity, and stifling her feelings, with a serene and cheerful countenance she thus replied :

" I shall not venture, my lord, to insist, as my excuse, upon the many noble and amiable qualities which, I confess with tears of shame, have brought me into this condition ; yet indeed you may believe me when I say that ambition was not my motive. I knew the distinction, the impassable barrier between us ; but I saw you loved me ; you addressed me, you followed me ; and I could not help loving you again. But as it is your wish—and I cannot but the more admire you for it, who, being the son of a powerful Monarch, and graced with beauty, power, and glory, resign voluntarily your wishes to another—I am ready to yield to your entreaties, my lord (I had rather you would call them commands), in behalf of the friend whom you so much love. And if he can forgive me, if studying his will and happiness can at all atone for my past weakness " (her sweet face was covered with tears and blushes), " here, my lord, is my hand."

And he placed it in that of his friend Marino.

£

MASUCCIO OF SALERNO

GIACOMO PINTO AND THE CONJURER

Nor many years ago there resided in Salerno a youth whose name was Giacomo Pinto, who, though of noble descent, and dwelling in the vicinity of Porta Nuova, where the academy of sense belonging to our city was commonly supposed to hold its sittings, would have found a much more suitable habitation in the heights of our mountain district, where nearly all of our ancient families are said first to have drawn their breath.

Now, though overburdened with neither wealth nor discretion, our hero was not wanting in a certain noble ambition, which spurred him on to lay siege to the affections of a young and pretty widow related to our fellow-citizen Stradico. This, his first love, he contrived to conceal in such a manner that not a child in all Salerno failed to perceive it, furnishing the most agreeable scandal to every party in the place. In fact, he became the butt of all his acquaintance; but their darts were less keen than those of love, and, heedless of their point, he pursued his enterprise with a fervour and perseverance worthy of his ancestors.

Among others residing near him who most amused themselves with observing the daily proofs of his folly during the progress of the siege, was a gentleman of the name of Loisi Pagano, whose great penetration and pleasing manners winning poor Giacomo's entire confidence, the latter often entertained him with the history of this his cruel passion.

Perceiving the extravagant turn it had taken, Loisi began to think how he might employ the enamoured wight's folly to some useful purpose in chastising the conceit of a certain upstart in Salerno who took the name of Messer Angelo, and who, though only a farrier, had assumed the profession of a physician, trafficking in different parts of Italy, whence he returned home with the spoil of his dead patients. Conversing one day with Giacomo on the same eternal subject, he addressed the lover as follows:

"You must surely, my dear friend, care very little about the sufferings you talk of, when you might so easily put an end to them.

You know Messer Angelo is one of the greatest conjurers in the world, and I can give you a proof of it, inasmuch as I have happily consulted him on many occasions, and never been deceived. He is, moreover, your relation on the mother's side. Why not hasten to him, and prevail upon him with a little pleasing flattery to exercise his art in your favour, by which you will infallibly arrive at the object of your wishes? Or if he should think of imposing upon you, as he has most probably done upon many others, you can give him such a lesson in return as will teach him how to behave to gentlemen in future, and remember you ever after."

Great was the joy and gratitude evinced by Giacomo on hearing these words, and flattering himself with the happiest results, he promised to do everything required of him. His friend Loisi, then excusing himself, lost no time in finding Messer Angelo, to whom he communicated his plan with no slight pleasure, thinking of the sport they were about to have. Little did Messer Angelo suppose, as he stood laughing, with what satisfaction Loisi was anticipating his chastisement, while he made poor Giacomo his dupe, and arranged measures before parting for executing their roguish scheme.

Not long afterwards the lover despatched a messenger for Messer Angelo, and told him in a lamentable voice his grand secret, already known to everybody in the place, how sadly he pined in love, concluding, with many sighs.

"You know, my good uncle, a friend in need is a friend indeed; and I have been informed that you are a great magician, whose infinite skill, if you please, can easily deliver me from all my pains; and so I beseech you, in the name of Heaven, that you will take pity on me, that I may obtain the dear object of my wishes, and owe my life and everything I have to you alone."

With a cheerful countenance, Messer Angelo replied he should be happy to do anything in his power to serve him, and, among other things, at last addressed him thus:

"But, my dear Giacomo, I am somewhat fearful of the result, as my plan would require, on your part, the utmost resolution and courage."

"Only tell me what it is," cried the lover, "for I declare I am ready to descend into the infernal regions if necessary; such is the strength of my love."

"Nay," answered he, "it is worse than that; for the truth is, you will have to hold a dialogue, face to face, with a ferocious demon called Barabas, the only one whom I have it at present in my power to summon for my commands."

"Well," continued Giacomo, "I will, if you please, speak to Satan himself, who is greater, you know; that is, if it be necessary."

"Heaven grant you courage!" cried the conjurer; "but how are

we to get the proper implements for the work? We must have a sword that has despatched a man, in the first place."

"Oh, I can get one of my brother's that has killed ten in its time," cried Giacomo.

"Well, that is the most important," replied Messer Angelo; "we can easily provide the rest. However, let there be in readiness when I ask for them a black and well-fed wether lamb and four fat capons, and check your impatience till the moon is in her wane. Leave the rest to me, for I promise you, you shall have the lady in your own hands, for better or worse, whichever you please."

Overjoyed with such an offer, Giacomo vowed to have everything in readiness as the necromancer had pointed out; who then repaired to Loisi, informing him of what had been fixed upon, in order to obviate any mistake that might arise. Often did they amuse themselves, before proceeding to work, with the simplicity of Giacomo, who hardly ever ceased for three days to tease the conjurer to commence the ceremonies.

"Well, for my part, I am quite ready now," exclaimed Angelo, "but have you prepared what I enjoined you?"

"To be sure I have," returned Giacomo, "and think myself very lucky too, for I have got the finest capons you ever saw from my lady cousin; and, better still, I can show you a young wether as fat as a bull, jet black, with four great horns, enough to frighten you to look at."

Quite delighted, Messer Angelo observed, "Indeed, cousin, I hardly know you; love has so sharpened all your faculties at once. No one else could possibly have got together all the things requisite so very soon; but to-night shall reward you: I will put everything in order, and call for you when I set out."

Angelo then returned to Loisi, to tell him where he was to expect them, as all was fixed. It was no sooner night than the conjurer adjourned to the house of the lover, saying:

"Would you like to come? It is quite time."

He was answered in the affirmative; and seizing the homicidal sword, and placing the fat lamb on his shoulder, and a capon under each arm, he conducted the devoted lover into the midst of some awful ruins, where Loisi lay concealed accompanied by several friends, in order not to engross the whole scene to himself. Here Messer Angelo, turning towards Giacomo, said:

"Take notice, my friend, we are now advanced too far to think of retreating without the most imminent risk; so look you do not flinch, and above all, beware how you call on the Lord or the Virgin: aye, or confess yourself either, for we should all sink down together into the bottomless pit. But if you should feel some qualms of fear (and how can you help it?), address yourself to the Redeemer, for

you will want one, and we may perhaps escape the wiles of the Wicked One."

This our hero promised to do if possible, and the great necromancer then proceeded :

" You must repeat after me exactly what I say ; and when we have conjured him up, Barabas will give a loud cry, saying, ' Now, give me my supper,' and then throw the capons at him to stop his mouth, and send the wether after them when the great horned beast roars out."

This the lover promised manfully to perform, and the order being given, out sprung the murderous sword, drawing a vast circle on the ground, and strange hieroglyphics within, while strong sulphurous fumes rose on all sides, and incantations dire, and contortions of hands and eyes were seen.

" Put your left leg into the circle this moment, Giacomo, and tell me whether you would rather see him in all his horrors face to face, or hear him speak from the old castle window yonder."

The poor lover, whose simplicity had brought him with such vast courage into the dilemma, hearing such an awful commencement, began to tremble, saying :

" It would perhaps be enough at first to hear him speak " ; advancing his foot at the same time into the circle, and, against the agreement, recommending himself to every saint in heaven.

His master, perceiving that he already thought himself transported into the other world, ordered him three times to pronounce the name of Barabas : the first only of which he effectually did. Loisi, in the disguise of the wicked one, then threw up a blaze of fire with a noise like thunder, enough to frighten the stoutest heart. Whether Giacomo wished himself at home again there is little need to inquire ; but, encouraged by the conjurer, he called out a second time, when a greater conflagration than before met his view.

Though his master failed not to observe the poor lover half dead with fear, he still urged him on, saying, " Fear nothing ; the monster is well bound ; he can do you no harm ; so call him lustily for the third time," which, with the utmost exertion, he did ; but in so faint a voice that it was scarcely heard.

Loisi, on this, having sent up a third fiery signal, uttered a terrible yell, that nearly put an end to the poor lover's life. But the master, reminding him that the demon was bound, bade Giacomo stand firm and repeat the invocation exactly as he told him. When he tried to speak, his heart beat so violently that he could scarcely support himself ; and Messer Angelo, fearing lest he had already carried things too far, began to lecture Barabas for being so very outrageous. But Loisi and his companions, almost dead with laughter, perceiving that the conjurer did not proceed, fearful of losing their

sport, called out fiercely for the fat lamb and everything they had.

Then Messer Angelo, turning to the trembling lover, cried,

"Throw him everything you have, and fly for your life, without ever looking behind you."

No sooner did Giacomo, who truly felt as if he were got into the wrong world, hear these joyous words, than flinging capons, lamb, and everything else into the demon's den, he took to his legs at a speed that defied all pursuit.

After he had arrived with some difficulty at home, Messer Angelo soon joined him, saying.

"Well, what think you of my necromantic art? Come, speak; be of good cheer; we shall finish the business next time."

"Say no more about it," cried Giacomo faintly; "I would not go back with you for worlds; so find some other way of conjuring the lady for me, and I shall be eternally obliged to you."

"Well, be it so," returned Angelo; "I am determined you shall succeed, and will do everything in my power to serve you."

On which he left him to repose. Loisi, in the meanwhile, having taken the animals offered to him by way of oblation, dismissed his companions and betook himself to rest. The next day he resolved to give a splendid feast, with the help of these and other good things, in honour of Giacomo and the friends who had witnessed the preceding scene. The dinner-hour being arrived, not a guest could refrain from laughter when Giacomo with great solemnity entered the room. Whispers, peals of laughter, and cries of "Barabas, Barabas! make way for Barabas!" were echoed from side to side.

Giacomo soon found he was the sole object of their merriment; on which Loisi, who had laid the whole scheme, saw that the time was come to execute his design of turning the tables upon the conjurer himself, and correcting him for many of his old faults. With this view, taking Giacomo aside after dinner, he acquainted him in a friendly way with everything that Angelo had done to make him ridiculous in their eyes. Giacomo, bearing in mind Loisi's words, set off with the most deadly intentions to find the hated necromancer. Without saying a word, he seized him by the hair of his head, and throwing him down, began to punish him with a degree of severity which it was extremely difficult for the conjurer to bear. Leaving him for some moments senseless upon the ground, our hero in his passion seized upon a huge stone near him, which would for ever have terminated the conjurer's career, had not his friends approached to deliver him out of the lover's hands.

Recovering him from his rage, and aware of all the follies of which he had been guilty, Giacomo, overcome with shame, retired to his own house, which he only left again to depart also from the city. Having disposed of his little property, he purchased for himself a

steed and arms, and setting out for the seat of war, had the good fortune, aided by prudence and valour, to arrive at wealth and honour, esteemed by his comrades and commanders. For the whole of which he may be said to have been indebted to love and Messer Angelo ; the latter of whom having received his just deserts at the hands of Giacomo, it only remains for us to admire the very mysterious and miraculous powers of the blind archer-boy, who, with a little assistance from Fortune, can confer so much happiness on those who enjoy his smiles.

GIO SABADINO

B. 1450

MAESTRO NICCOLO AND THE PIG

Not very long ago there were four noble, though somewhat humorous, students residing at our University of Sienna, whose names were Messer Antonio da Clerico, a canonist ; Messer Giovanni da Santo Geminiano, a young jurist ; Maestro Antonio di Paulo di Val d'Arno d'Arezzo ; and Maestro Michel di Cosimo Aretino delli Conti di Palazzolo, who, when young, was surnamed Bacica, now a distinguished civilian in the University of Bologna, full of years and virtue, beloved by the whole people for his kind and charitable actions. But, waiving these last considerations, I proceed to inform you that, while remaining in the house of the Master of the Academy of Arts, the youthful pupils became acquainted with a certain disciple of Galen, who, though a mere quack, imagined he was possessed of more learning than Avicenna himself. His name was Niccolo da Massa, to which had been added that of *Portantino*, from the peculiarity of his ambling gait ; and as his residence lay opposite to that of the governor, his singularities attracted the particular attention of the pupils.

Now it happened that in the month of February, during the salting season, the doctor had purchased a fine pig, which he subsequently had killed and hung up, as is usual, previous to the operation of salting, for four or five days in his kitchen. The merry scholars, aware of this stage of the proceedings, set their heads to contrive how they might feast at the doctor's charge. It so fell out that a fellow-student named Messer Pietro di Leri Martini, had lately left the academy, and afterwards died of a fever, and on this fact they resolved to ground the success of their exploit. Introducing themselves secretly into the doctor's premises, and watching their opportunity, they laid hands upon the pork, a fact which struck the doctor with equal horror and surprise when he beheld his kitchen the next morning emptied of its treasure. After indulging in a variety of imprecations and suspicions, his doubts at last fell upon his young

neighbours, the scholars, who had indeed already acquired some little reputation for similar exploits.

Believing that he had now discovered the authors of the diabolical theft, he waited on Messer Amadio da Citta di Castello, the presiding magistrate in Sienna, who, having heard his evidence, despatched three several messengers commanding an immediate restoration of the pork to the right owner, unless the young gentlemen wished to be proceeded against criminally.

The answer which the magistrate received was, that the scholars were greatly surprised at such a message, and were sorry that they had not so fine a pig in their possession, happening to know nothing about it. But being still persecuted with the complaints of the doctor, the magistrate resolved to investigate the affair thoroughly, sending a warrant to search the scholars' chambers, and to bring them all before him should the pork be discovered in their possession.

Expecting such a visit, the students were not a little puzzled how to proceed, when Messer Antonio da Clerico, who by his singular ingenuity and facetiousness had always shown himself equal to every emergency, encouraged the flagging spirits of his companions, saying: "Fear not, my brave boys, fear not the Podesta and his myrmidons: we will be a match for them yet. We will extract a little amusement out of them, too, if you mind what I say. Let us get up a sick couch in the chamber opposite the entrance hall, and fill it with all kinds of the most sickly preparations that can disgust the human nose. And when the officers come, you must all stand at the entrance, buried in profound grief; and when they ask you what is the matter, shake your heads and point to the inner chamber, saying, 'Poor fellow! he is dying of the plague.' Now this sick gentleman shall be no other than the pig, and trust me, whoever ventures within sight of him shall wish himself away again as speedily as possible. For you know the whole city is disturbed about the death of our fellow-student, who died only the other day of the plague."

His companions immediately set up a loud laugh, in token of their approbation, crying, "Come, let us go to work, then; we cannot be hanged for it, after all."

Then preparing a table spread with cushions, they laid the pig upon it at full length, with a nightcap over his head, and stuck out his fore feet with white sleeves, so as to resemble the arms of a human being; while his hind ones were decorated with a pair of slippers. Soon after completing their arrangements appeared the officers of the police, who, on requiring entrance, were readily admitted by the scholars, some of whom, on advancing farther, they found overwhelmed with sorrow, wringing their hands, and crying out most piteously, "Oh, my dear, dear brother!" at which the

officers, apprehending some fatal accident, inquired into the cause of complaint.

The shrewd Maestro Michel on this stepped forward : " It is my brother, my poor brother, who is here dying, we are afraid."

" Dying ! what is the matter with him ? "

" They say it is the plague ; but I will never desert him ! "

On this one of the officers opened the chamber door with some caution, and stumbling on the shocking object which presented itself, drew back in great alarm ; for on the left hand was seen Messer Antonio as the priest, administering spiritual consolation, with book and crucifix in hand, and wax-lights burning, to the poor scholar, falling apparently a victim to the plague. At this overpowering sight, without saying a word, he ran out of the house, followed by his companions. Returning to the magistrate, he with difficulty made himself understood, expressing the utmost horror of the business on which he had been sent.

" How," cried the magistrate, " can it be true ? "

" True ! " returned the officer ; " I saw the poor wretch stretched out, dying of the plague, and his brother and all his companions buried in the deepest grief."

" And did you go into the room ? Did you touch the body ? " inquired the magistrate.

" To be sure I did."

" Then why do you come here ? Away with you, you wretches ; we shall have the whole city infected " ; and the magistrate drove them away, forbidding them, as they valued their lives, again to enter into his presence.

The wily Messer Antonio, called the priest in the meanwhile, observing the rout of these myrmidons of the law, hastily dressed himself amidst the triumph and applauses of his companions, and set out for the house of the Podesta, in order to obviate any disagreeable consequences that might attend the tidings which had just gone forth. He arrived just in time to catch the magistrate as he was proceeding to the grand council to acquaint the members with the fact which had just transpired, and propose means for the safety of the city. To him, then, Messer Antonio related the whole of the affair on the part of the scholars as it had occurred from the beginning.

It was a great relief to the magistrate to hear that there was really no pestilential disorder abroad ; and he laughed outright at the humorous way in which Messer Antonio related to him the incidents of the story. " Oh you collegians ! " he cried, " you are true children of perdition ! There is nothing of which you are not capable ; and woe to the unfortunate wretch that falls into your hands ! "

As they were now approaching the Palazzo delli Signori, the

Podesta resolved, instead of alarming them with tidings of the plague, to amuse them with one of the best stories which he had for some time heard. Such was the pleasure which it afforded, that they obliged its ingenious author to repeat the whole to them again, mingling their mirth with a little seasonable advice, and commanding him to make immediate restitution of the doctor's pig. But to this, with one voice, the scholars all demurred, beseeching their lordships that they would not please to insist on such hard conditions, inasmuch as it would be throwing a sort of discredit on real learning were they to refuse to permit the scholars to punish so much absurd quackery and ignorance as were manifested by this disciple of Galen; and they trusted that their lordships would not interfere to interrupt the joke in the happiest stage, but would permit them to eat the pig since they had caught it. Grateful for the entertainment afforded them, the council could scarcely prevail upon themselves to treat the ingenious author of the plot with the rigour of the law, although they strongly advised restitution of the pig. But the humorous Antonio conducted his defence in so happy and eloquent a manner that the pork was allowed to remain in the hands of the scholars, and the court adjourned. They immediately proceeded to regale themselves with the spoils they had won. Frequently that night did they drink to the health of Dr. Portantino, who had presented them with a portion of the feast; nor were the wines less relished after they had partaken of roasted pig.

GIOVANNI BREVIO

1480-1562

BELPHAGOR

WE read in the ancient archives of Florence the following account, as it was received from the lips of a very holy man, greatly respected by every one for the sanctity of his manners at the period in which he lived. Happening once to be deeply absorbed in his prayers, such was their efficacy, that he saw an infinite number of condemned souls, belonging to those miserable mortals who had died in their sins, undergoing the punishment due to their offences in the regions below. He remarked that the greater part of them lamented nothing so bitterly as their folly in having taken wives, attributing to them the whole of their misfortunes.

Much surprised at this, Minos and Rhadamanthus, with the rest of the infernal judges, unwilling to credit all the abuse heaped upon the female sex, and wearied from day to day with its repetition, agreed to bring the matter before Pluto. It was then resolved that the conclave of infernal princes should form a committee of inquiry, and should adopt such measures as might be deemed most advisable by the court in order to discover the truth or falsehood of the calumnies which they heard. All being assembled in council, Pluto addressed them as follows :

" Dearly beloved demons ! though by celestial dispensation and the irreversible decree of fate this kingdom fell to my share, and I might strictly dispense with any kind of celestial or earthly responsibility, yet, as it is more prudent and respectful to consult the laws and to hear the opinion of others, I have resolved to be guided by your advice, particularly in a case that may chance to cast some imputation upon our government. For the souls of all men daily arriving in our kingdom still continue to lay the whole blame upon their wives, and as this appears to us impossible, we must be careful how we decide in such a business, lest we also should come in for a share of their abuse on account of our too great severity ; and yet judgment must be pronounced, lest we be taxed with negligence and with indifference to the interests of justice. Now, as the latter is the fault of a careless, and the former of an unjust judge, we,

wishing to avoid the trouble and the blame that might attach to both, yet hardly seeing how to get clear of it, naturally enough apply to you for assistance, in order that you may look to it, and contrive in some way that, as we have hitherto reigned without the slightest imputation upon our character, we may continue to do so for the future."

The affair appearing to be of the utmost importance to all the princes present, they first resolved that it was necessary to ascertain the truth, though they differed as to the best means of accomplishing this object. Some were of opinion that they ought to choose one or more from among themselves, who should be commissioned to pay a visit to the world, and in a human shape endeavour personally to ascertain how far such reports were grounded in truth. To many others it appeared that this might be done without so much trouble merely by compelling some of the wretched souls to confess the truth by the application of a variety of tortures. But the majority being in favour of a journey to the world, they abided by the former proposal.

No one, however, being ambitious of undertaking such a task, it was resolved to leave the affair to chance.

The lot fell upon the arch-devil Belpagor, who previous to the Fall had enjoyed the rank of archangel in a higher world. Though he received his commission with a very ill grace, he nevertheless felt himself constrained by Pluto's imperial mandate, and prepared to execute whatever had been determined upon in council. At the same time he took an oath to observe the tenor of his instructions, as they had been drawn up with all due solemnity and ceremony for the purpose of his mission. These were to the following effect :

Imprimis, that the better to promote the object in view, he should be furnished with a hundred thousand gold ducats ; secondly, that he should make use of the utmost expedition in getting into the world ; thirdly, that after assuming the human form he should enter into the marriage state ; and lastly, that he should live with his wife for the space of ten years.

At the expiration of this period he was to feign death and return home, in order to acquaint his employers, by the fruits of experience, what really were the respective conveniences and inconveniences of matrimony. The conditions further ran, that during the said ten years he should be subject to all kinds of miseries and disasters, like the rest of mankind, such as poverty, prisons, and diseases into which men are apt to fall, unless, indeed, he could contrive by his own skill and ingenuity to avoid them.

Poor Belpagor having signed these conditions and received the money, forthwith came into the world, and having set up his equipage, with a numerous train of servants, he made a very

splendid entrance into Florence. He selected this city in preference to all others as being most favourable for obtaining usurious interest of his money ; and having assumed the name of Roderigo, a native of Castile, he took a house in the suburbs of Ognissanti. And because he was unable to explain the instructions under which he acted he gave out that he was a merchant who, having had poor prospects in Spain, had gone to Syria, and succeeded in acquiring his fortune at Aleppo, whence he had lastly set out for Italy with the intention of marrying and settling there, as one of the most polished and agreeable countries he knew.

Roderigo was certainly a very handsome man, apparently about thirty years of age, and he lived in a style of life that showed he was in pretty easy circumstances, if not possessed of immense wealth. Being, moreover, extremely affable and liberal, he soon attracted the notice of many noble citizens blessed with large families of daughters and small incomes. The former of these were soon offered to him, from among whom Roderigo chose a very beautiful girl of the name of Onesta, a daughter of Amerigo Donati, who had also three sons, all grown up, and three more daughters, also nearly marriageable. Though of a noble family and enjoying a good reputation in Florence, his father-in-law was extremely poor, and maintained as poor an establishment.

Roderigo, therefore, made very splendid nuptials, and omitted nothing that might tend to confer honour upon such a festival, being liable, under the law which he received on leaving his infernal abode, to feel all kinds of vain and earthly passions. He therefore soon began to enter into all the pomps and vanities of the world, and to aim at reputation and consideration among mankind, which put him to no little expense. But more than this, he had not long enjoyed the society of his beloved Onesta, before he became tenderly attached to her, and was unable to behold her suffer the slightest inquietude or vexation.

Now, along with her other gifts of beauty and nobility, the lady had brought into the house of Roderigo such an insufferable portion of pride that in this respect Lucifer himself could not equal her ; for her husband, who had experienced the effects of both, was at no loss to decide which was the most intolerable of the two. Yet it became infinitely worse when she discovered the extent of Roderigo's attachment to her, of which she availed herself to obtain an ascendancy over him and rule him with a rod of iron. Not content with this, when she found he would bear it she continued to annoy him with all kinds of insults and taunts, in such a way as to give him the most indescribable pain and uneasiness.

For what with the influence of her father, her brothers, her friends, and relatives, the duty of the matrimonial yoke, and the

love he bore her, he suffered all for some time with the patience of a saint. It would be useless to recount the follies and extravagances into which he ran in order to gratify her taste for dress, and every article of the newest fashion in which our city, ever so variable in its nature, according to its usual habits, so much abounds. Yet, to live upon easy terms with her, he was obliged to do more than this; he had to assist his father-in-law in portioning off his other daughters; and she next asked him to furnish one of her brothers with goods to sail for the Levant, another with silks for the West, while a third was to be set up in a gold-beater's establishment at Florence. In such objects the greatest part of his fortune was soon consumed.

At length the Carnival season was at hand; the festival of St. John was to be celebrated, and the whole city, as usual, was in a ferment. Numbers of the noblest families were about to vie with each other in the splendour of their parties, and the Lady Onesta, being resolved not to be outshone by her acquaintance, insisted that Roderigo should exceed them all in the richness of their feasts. For the reasons above stated, he submitted to her will; nor, indeed, would he have scrupled at doing much more, however difficult it might have been, could he have flattered himself with a hope of preserving the peace and comfort of his household, and of awaiting quietly the consummation of his ruin.

But this was not the case, inasmuch as the arrogant temper of his wife had grown to such a height of asperity by long indulgence, that he was at a loss in what way to act. His domestics, male and female, would no longer remain in the house, being unable to support for any length of time the intolerable life they led. The inconvenience which he suffered in consequence of having no one to whom he could intrust his affairs it is impossible to express. Even his own familiar devils, whom he had brought along with him, had already deserted him, choosing to return below rather than longer submit to the tyranny of his wife.

Left, then, to himself, amidst this turbulent and unhappy life, and having dissipated all the ready money he possessed, he was compelled to live upon the hopes of the returns expected from his ventures in the East and the West. Being still in good credit, in order to support his rank he resorted to bills of exchange; nor was it long before, accounts running against him, he found himself in the same situation as many other unhappy speculators in that market.

Just as his case became extremely delicate, there arrived sudden tidings both from East and West that one of his wife's brothers had dissipated the whole of Roderigo's profits in play, and that while the other was returning with a rich cargo uninsured, his ship had the misfortune to be wrecked, and he himself was lost. No sooner did this affair transpire than his creditors assembled, and supposing it

must be all over with him, though their bills had not yet become due, they resolved to keep a strict watch over him in fear that he might abscond.

Roderigo, on his part, thinking that there was no other remedy, and feeling how deeply he was bound by the Stygian law, determined at all hazards to make his escape. So taking horse one morning early, as he luckily lived near the Prato gate, in that direction he went off. His departure was soon known ; the creditors were all in a bustle ; the magistrates were applied to, and the officers of justice, along with a great part of the populace, were despatched in pursuit. Roderigo had hardly proceeded a mile before he heard this hue-and-cry, and the pursuers were soon so close at his heels that the only resource he had left was to abandon the high road and take to the open country, with the hope of concealing himself in the fields.

But finding himself unable to make way over the hedges and ditches, he left his horse and took to his heels, traversing fields of vines and canes, until he reached Peretola, where he entered the house of Matteo del Bricca, a labourer of Giovanna del Bene. Finding him at home, for he was busily providing fodder for his cattle, our hero earnestly entreated him to save him from the hands of his adversaries close behind, who would infallibly starve him to death in a dungeon, engaging that if Matteo would give him refuge he would make him one of the richest men alive, and afford him such proofs of it before he took his leave as would convince him of the truth of what he said ; and if he failed to do this, he was quite content that Matteo himself should deliver him into the hands of his enemies.

Now Matteo, although a rustic, was a man of courage, and concluding that he could not lose anything by the speculation, he gave him his hand and agreed to save him. He then thrust our hero under a heap of rubbish, completely enveloping him in weeds ; so that when his pursuers arrived they found themselves quite at a loss, nor could they extract from Matteo the least information as to his appearance. In this dilemma there was nothing left for them but to proceed in the pursuit, which they continued for two days, and then returned, jaded and disappointed, to Florence. In the meanwhile, Matteo drew our hero from his hiding-place, and begged him to fulfil his engagement.

To this his friend Roderigo replied :

" I confess, brother, that I am under great obligations to you, and I mean to return them. To leave no doubt upon your mind, I will inform you who I am " ; and he proceeded to acquaint him with all the particulars of the affair, how he had come into the world, and married, and run away.

He next described to his preserver the way in which he might become rich, which was briefly as follows: As soon as Matteo should hear of some lady in the neighbourhood being said to be possessed, he was to conclude that it was Roderigo himself who had taken possession of her; and he gave him his word, at the same time, that he would never leave her until Matteo should come and conjure him to depart. In this way he might obtain what sum he pleased from the lady's friends for the price of exorcising her; and having mutually agreed upon this plan, Roderigo disappeared.

Not many days elapsed before it was reported in Florence that the daughter of Messer Ambrogio Amedei, a lady married to Buonajuto Tebalducci, was possessed by the devil. Her relations did not fail to apply every means usual on such occasions to expel him, such as making her wear upon her head St. Zanobi's cap, and the cloak of St. John of Gualberto; but these had only the effect of making Roderigo laugh. And to convince them that it was really a spirit that possessed her, and that it was no flight of the imagination, he made the young lady talk Latin, hold a philosophical dispute, and reveal the frailties of many of her acquaintance. He particularly accused a certain friar of having introduced a lady into his monastery in male attire, to the no small scandal of all who heard it, and the astonishment of the brotherhood.

Messer Ambrogio found it impossible to silence him, and began to despair of his daughter's cure. But the news reaching Matteo, he lost no time in waiting upon Ambrogio, assuring him of his daughter's recovery on condition of his paying him five hundred florins, with which to purchase a farm at Peretola. To this Messer Ambrogio consented; and Matteo immediately ordered a number of masses to be said, after which he proceeded with some unmeaning ceremonies calculated to give solemnity to his task. Then approaching the young lady, he whispered in her ear:

"Roderigo, it is Matteo that is come. So do as we agreed upon, and get out."

Roderigo replied: "It is all well; but you have not asked enough to make you a rich man. So when I depart I will take possession of the daughter of Charles, King of Naples, and I will not leave her till you come. You may then demand whatever you please for your reward; and mind that you never trouble me again."

And when he had said this, he went out of the lady, to the no small delight and amazement of the whole city of Florence.

It was not long again before the accident that had happened to the daughter of the King of Naples began to be buzzed about the country, and all the monkish remedies having been found to fail, the King, hearing of Matteo, sent for him from Florence. On

arriving at Naples, Matteo, after a few ceremonies, performed the cure. Before leaving the Princess, however, Roderigo said :

" You see, Matteo, I have kept my promise and made a rich man of you, and I owe you nothing now. So, henceforward you will take care to keep out of my way, lest, as I have hitherto done you some good, just the contrary should happen to you in future."

Upon this Matteo thought it best to return to Florence, after receiving fifty thousand ducats from His Majesty, in order to enjoy his riches in peace, and never once imagining that Roderigo would come in his way again.

But in this he was deceived ; for he soon heard that a daughter of Louis, King of France, was possessed by an evil spirit, which disturbed our friend Matteo not a little, thinking of His Majesty's great authority and of what Roderigo had said. Hearing of Matteo's great skill, and finding no other remedy, the King despatched a messenger for him, whom Matteo contrived to send back with a variety of excuses.

But this did not long avail him ; the King applied to the Florentine council, and our hero was compelled to attend. Arriving with no very pleasant sensations at Paris, he was introduced into the royal presence, when he assured His Majesty that though it was true he had acquired some fame in the course of his demoniac practice, he could by no means always boast of success, and that some devils were of such a desperate character as not to pay the least attention to threats, enchantments, or even the exorcisms of religion itself. He would, nevertheless, do His Majesty's pleasure, entreating at the same time to be held excused if it should happen to prove an obstinate case.

To this the King made answer, that be the case what it might, he would certainly hang him if he did not succeed. It is impossible to describe poor Matteo's terror and perplexity on hearing these words ; but at length mustering courage, he ordered the possessed Princess to be brought into his presence. Approaching as usual close to her ear, he conjured Roderigo in the most humble terms, by all he had ever done for him, not to abandon him in such a dilemma, but to show some sense of gratitude for past services and to leave the Princess.

" Ah ! thou traitorous villain ! " cried Roderigo, " hast thou, indeed, ventured to meddle in this business ? Dost thou boast thyself a rich man at my expense ? I will now convince the world and thee of the extent of my power, both to give and to take away. I shall have the pleasure of seeing thee hanged before thou leavest this place."

Poor Matteo finding there was no remedy, said nothing more, but, like a wise man, set his head to work in order to discover

some other means of expelling the spirit ; for which purpose he said to the King :

" Sire, it is as I feared : there are certain spirits of so malignant a character that there is no keeping any terms with them, and this is one of them. However, I will make a last attempt, and I trust that it will succeed according to our wishes. If not, I am in your Majesty's power, and I hope you will take compassion on my innocence. In the first place, I have to entreat that your Majesty will order a large stage to be erected in the centre of the great square, such as will admit the nobility and clergy of the whole city. The stage ought to be adorned with all kinds of silks and with cloth of gold, and with an altar raised in the middle. To-morrow morning I would have your Majesty, with your full train of lords and ecclesiastics in attendance, seated in order and in magnificent array, as spectators of the scene at the said place. There, after having celebrated solemn mass, the possessed Princess must appear ; but I have in particular to entreat that on one side of the square may be stationed a band of men with drums, trumpets, horns, tambours, bagpipes, cymbals, and kettle-drums, and all other kinds of instruments that make the most infernal noise. Now, when I take my hat off, let the whole band strike up, and approach with the most horrid uproar towards the stage. This, along with a few other secret remedies which I shall apply, will surely compel the spirit to depart."

These preparations were accordingly made by the royal command ; and when the day, being Sunday morning, arrived, the stage was seen crowded with people of rank and the square with the people. Mass was celebrated, and the possessed Princess conducted between two bishops, with a train of nobles, to the spot.

Now, when Roderigo beheld so vast a concourse of people, together with all this awful preparation, he was almost struck dumb with astonishment, and said to himself :

" I wonder what that cowardly wretch is thinking of doing now ? Does he imagine I have never seen finer things than these in the regions above—ay ! and more horrid things below ? However, I will soon make him repent it, at all events."

Matteo then approaching him, besought him to come out ; but Roderigo replied :

" Oh, you think you have done a fine thing now ! What do you mean to do with all this trumpery ? Can you escape my power, think you, in this way, or elude the vengeance of the King ? Thou poltroon villain, I will have thee hanged for this !"

And as Matteo continued the more to entreat him, his adversary still vilified him in the same strain. So Matteo, believing there was no time to be lost, made the sign with his hat, when all the musicians

who had been stationed there for the purpose suddenly struck up a hideous din, and ringing a thousand peals, approached the spot.

Roderigo pricked up his ears at the sound, quite at a loss what to think, and rather in a perturbed tone of voice he asked Matteo what it meant.

To this the latter returned, apparently much alarmed :

“ Alas ! dear Roderigo, it is your wife ; she is coming for you ! ”

It is impossible to give an idea of the anguish of Roderigo's mind and the strange alteration which his feelings underwent at that name. The moment the name of “ wife ” was pronounced, he had not longer presence of mind to consider whether it were probable, or even possible, that it could be her. Without replying a single word, he leaped out and fled in the utmost terror, leaving the lady to herself, and preferring rather to return to his infernal abode and render an account of his adventures, than run the risk of any further sufferings and vexations under the matrimonial yoke.

And thus Belpagor again made his appearance in the infernal domains, bearing ample testimony to the evils introduced into a household by a wife ; while Matteo, on his part, who knew more of the matter than the devil, returned triumphantly home, not a little proud of the victory he had achieved.

MATTEO BANDELLO
1480-1562

KING MANSOR AND THE FISHERMAN

KING MANSOR of Morocco, among other amusements, was immoderately fond of the chase ; and it one day so happened that, being on a hunting excursion, he was surprised by a terrific storm, which, with irresistible fury laying waste both corn and woodlands, soon dispersed his courtiers on all sides in search of shelter. Mistaking his way in the confusion which ensued, King Mansor, separated at length from his companions, wandered through the forests until nightfall, and such was the tempestuous raging of the winds that, almost despairing of finding shelter, he checked his steed, doubtful which way he should venture to proceed. From the terrific darkness of the sky, relieved only by sheets of flashing light shooting across the far horizon, he was fearful of going farther, lest he should incur still greater danger, either by riding into pitfalls or the deep marshes bordering the forest grounds. As he thus stood, listening to the distant thunder and the raving of the storm, he stretched his view in vain to discover some signs of human existence ; until, on proceeding a few more steps, a light suddenly appeared at only a short distance from him. It was from the window of a poor fisherman's hut, who earned his livelihood by catching eels in the adjacent pools and marshes. On hearing the voice of the King, who rushed forward with a shout of joy on beholding a human habitation, the fisherman hastened to the assistance of the bewildered traveller, whom he believed to have lost his way in the storm. Inquiring who called, King Mansor approached near, and entreated him, if he possessed the least charity, to direct him by the shortest path to the residence of the monarch.

"The King's court," replied the poor man, "is distant from this place above ten long miles."

"Yet I will make it worth your trouble, friend, to guide me thither ; consent to oblige me, and you shall have no reason to

complain," said the King.

"Though you were King Mansor himself," returned the fisherman, "who entreated as much, I would not venture upon it at this hour of the night, and such a night as this is ; for I should render myself guilty, perhaps, of leading our honoured Monarch into destruction. The night is dark, and the waters are out around us."

"But why should you, friend, be so very solicitous about the safety of the King?"

"Oh," replied the good man, "because I honour him more than I do any one else, and love him more than myself."

"But what good has he ever done you," asked the King, "that you should hold him in such high esteem? Methinks you would be rather more comfortably lodged and clothed were you any extraordinary favourite of his."

"Not so," answered the fisherman ; "for tell me, Sir Knight, what greater favour can I receive from my honoured King, in my humble sphere, than to be protected in the enjoyment of my house and goods, and the little earnings which I make? All I have I owe to his kindness, to the wisdom and justice with which he rules over his subjects, preserving us in peace or protecting us in war from the inroads of the Arabs, as well as all other enemies. Even I, a poor fisherman, with a wife and little family, am not forgotten, and enjoy my poverty in peace. He permits me to fish for eels wherever I please, and take them afterwards to the best market I can find, in order to provide for my little ones. At any hour, night or day, I go out or I come in just as I like, to or fro, in my humble dwelling ; and there is not a single person in all these neighbouring woods and valleys who has ever dared to do me wrong. To whom am I indebted for all this but to him for whom I daily offer up my prayers to God and our holy prophet to watch over his preservation? But why do I talk, when I see you, Sir Knight, before me, dripping from the pelting of this pitiless storm? Deign to come within, and receive what shelter my poor cabin will afford ; to-morrow I will conduct you to the King, or wherever else you please."

Mansor now freely availed himself of the invitation, and, dismounting from his horse, sought refuge from the still raging storm. The poor steed likewise shared the accommodation prepared in a little outhouse for the good man's ass, partaking of the corn and hay. Seated by the side of a good fire, the King was employed in drying himself and recruiting his exhausted strength, while the wife was busily cooking the eels for his royal supper. When they were served, having a decided distaste for fish, he somewhat anxiously inquired whether there was no kind of meat for which he might exchange them. The fisherman very honestly declared that it was true he had a she-goat with a kid ; and perceiving that his guest

was no unworthy personage, he directly offered to serve it up to table ; which having done, he presented the King with those parts generally esteemed the best and the most delicious. After supper the Monarch, retiring to his rustic couch, reposed his wearied limbs and slumbered until the sun was up.

At the appointed hour he once more mounted his steed, attended by his kind host, who now took upon himself the office of a guide. They had scarcely proceeded beyond the confines of the marshes when they encountered several of the King's party, calling aloud in the utmost anxiety and searching for their royal master in every direction. Unbounded was the joy and congratulation of the courtiers on thus meeting with him safe and uninjured. The King then, turning round to the poor fisherman, informed him that he was the Monarch whom he had so much praised, and whom he had so humanely and honourably received the foregoing evening, and that he might rely upon him that his singular courtesy and goodwill should not go unrewarded.

Now, there were certain hunting-lodges which the King had erected in those parts for the convenience which they afforded in his excursions, and several of his nobles had likewise adorned the surrounding country with various seats and other dwellings, so as to give a pleasing relief to the prospect. With the view of bestowing a handsome remuneration upon the good fisherman, the grateful Monarch gave orders that the pools and marshes adjacent to these dwellings should be drained. He then circumscribed the limits of a noble city, comprehending the palaces and houses already erected, and after conferring upon it various rich immunities, by which it shortly became both very populous and powerful, he named the place Cesar Elcabor, or the Great Palace, and presented it as a token of his gratitude to the honest fisherman.

At the period when his sons succeeded to it, no city throughout the King's dominions was to be compared with it in point of splendour and beauty of appearance. The mosques were extremely grand, nor were the colleges and hospitals less worthy of admiration. The inhabitants were in general liberal and kind-hearted men, of simple manners, and neat and plain in their dress and appearance. The gardens were at once spacious and beautiful, abounding in all kinds of fruits, which supplied a weekly market, the emporium of all the surrounding country.

MATTEO BANDELLO

THE MISCHIEVOUS APE

IN the time of Lodovico Sforza, the unfortunate Duke of Milan, there was kept, among other living curiosities, in the ducal palace, a large and beautiful ape, whose amusing yet harmless manners, full of practical jests and witticisms, had long obtained for him the liberty of going at large. Such, indeed, was his reputation for prudence and good conduct that he was not merely permitted the range of the whole palace, but frequently visited the outskirts, in the vicinity of Maine, of Cusano, and San Giovanni, and was not unfrequently seen conversing with some friend upon the walls. In fact, most people were eager to show their respect for him by presenting him with fruits and other dainties, no less from regard to his ducal patron than to his own intrinsic merits. The singular pleasure he afforded to all classes of society by his happy talents of various kinds was always a sufficient passport from place to place.

But his favourite resort, among many others, was the house of an ancient gentlewoman, situated in the parish of San Giovanni, upon the walls, where he cultivated the society of her two sons, one of whom in particular, though at the head of a family, invariably received his monkey guest in the most amiable manner, making him as much at home as if he had been the lady's favourite lapdog. These young men, perceiving their aged mother amused with the animal's unequalled exhibitions of his art, vied with each other in paying the most gratifying attentions to his monkeyship, and would certainly, had he not happened to have been ducal property, either have purchased or stolen him, merely out of regard to their mother. The whole household, likewise, received orders to treat him with the same invariable kindness and respect, studying what appeared most agreeable to his taste, so as to give him an affection for the old lady's house. This last motive weighed so greatly with his ape-ship that he almost deserted his other neighbours in order to enjoy more of the society of these very agreeable friends, although he was careful to return to his own ducal residence at the castle in the evening.

During this time the aged lady, becoming very infirm, no longer left her chamber, where she was affectionately attended by her

whole family, who supplied her with every alleviation in the power of medical advice to bestow. Thither, occasionally, our facetious hero was also introduced for the purpose of awakening a smile on the wan features of the patient by his strange and amusing manners, receiving some delicate morsels in return from the poor lady's own hand. As he possessed a natural taste, in common with most of his race, for every kind of sweets, he was in the habit of besieging the old lady's room with great perseverance and assiduity, feasting upon the best confectionery with far higher zest than the poor patient herself. Worn out at length by long infirmities and age, she soon after departed this world, having first with becoming piety confessed herself and received the holy sacraments of our Church, with the communion and extreme unction at the final close.

While the funeral ceremonies were preparing, and the last offices rendered to the deceased, the monkey appeared to pay remarkable attention to all that was going forward. The corpse being dressed, and placed on the funeral bier, the holy sisterhood then attended with the usual ceremonies, offering up hymns and aves to the Virgin for the soul of the deceased. The body was afterwards borne to the parish church not far distant, not unobserved by the monkey, who watched the procession depart. But he soon turned his attention to the state of things around him ; and after feasting on the cake and wine, being a little elevated, he began to empty the boxes and drawers, and examine the contents. Having observed the deceased in her last habiliments, and the form of her headdress when she was laid out, the facetious ape immediately began to array himself in the cast-off garments, exactly in the manner he had witnessed ; and so perfect was the resemblance, that when he had covered himself up in bed, the physician himself would have been puzzled to detect the cheat. Here the false patient lay when the domestics entered the chamber, and suddenly perceiving the monkey thus dexterously laid out, they ran back in the utmost terror and surprise, believing that they had really seen either the corpse or the spirit of the deceased. After recovering sufficient presence of mind to speak, they declared, as they hoped to be saved, that they had seen their mistress reposing upon her sick-couch as usual.

On the return of the two brothers with their friends and relatives from church, they directly resolved to ascend in a body into the sick-chamber ; and night already approaching, they all felt, in spite of their affected indifference, an unpleasant sensation on entering the room. Drawing near the bedside, they not only fancied they saw and heard a person breathe, but observing the coverings move, as if the patient were about to spring from the couch, they retreated with the utmost precipitation and alarm. When they had recovered their spirits a little, the guests requested that a priest might

be sent for, to whom, on his arrival, they proceeded to explain the case.

On hearing the nature of it, the good friar, being of a truly prudent and pious turn, despatched a person back for his clerk, with orders to bring with him the large ivory crucifix and the illuminated psalter. These, with the help of holy water, the wafer, and the priest's stole, were judged a sufficient match for the devices of the Evil One ; and thus armed, repeating the seven psalms, with due ejaculations to the Virgin, they once more ascended the stairs, the clerk, in obedience to the friar, bearing the huge ivory crucifix at their head. He had previously exhorted the brothers to have no fears for the final salvation of their parent, as the number and excellence of her confessions were an effectual preservative against the most diabolical efforts of the adversary. He maintained that there was not the least cause for alarm, for what the servants had beheld were merely Satanic illusions, which he had frequently been in the habit of dispelling with singular success ; and that having made use of his exorcisms, he would then bless the house, and, with the Lord's help, lay such a curse upon the bad spirits as would deprive them of the least inclination to return.

When they arrived at the chamber door, all the guests, in spite of these encouraging exhortations and the sprinkling of holy water, drew back, while the bold friar ordered his clerk to advance in the name of the Lord ; which he did, followed only by his superior. Approaching the sick-bed, they perceived Monna Bertuccia, our facetious ape, laid out, as we have said, in perfect personification of the deceased. After mumbling some prayers, and flourishing the cross in vain, for some time, they began to entertain doubts of their success, though at the same time they felt ashamed to retreat. So sprinkling the holy water with a more liberal hand, crying "*Asperges me domine ; asperges me*" ; they complimented the ape with a portion of it in his face. Expecting upon this to be next saluted with a blow of the huge cross, he suddenly began to grin and chatter in so horrible a manner, that the sacred vessel fell from the priest's hands, and the clerk at the same time dropping the crucifix, they both fled together. Such was their haste, that they stumbled one over the other down the stairs, the priest falling upon his clerk when they reached the bottom.

On hearing the sudden crash, and the terrified exclamations of the good friar, "*Jesus, Jesus, Domine, adjuva me*," the brothers, followed by the rest of the party, rushed towards the spot, eagerly inquiring what dreadful accident had occurred. Both of the holy personages gazed on the guests without being able to utter a word, but their pallid looks spoke volumes sufficient to answer all demands. The poor clerk fainted away, no less from excess of fear than from

the terrible fall he had just received. Having obliged both to partake of some restoratives, the priest at length summoned courage enough to say, "It is true, my dear children, I have indeed seen your poor departed mother in the form of a fierce demon"; when just as he had finished these words, the cause of all their disturbance, desirous of securing the remnants of the feast, was heard approaching at a pretty brisk and clattering pace down the unlucky stairs.

Without giving any of the party time to discover a fresh place of refuge, or even to prepare their minds for his reception, he bounced suddenly into the room, armed *cap-à-pie*, in the fearful petticoats of the deceased. His head was dressed to a nicety exactly in the same manner as the old lady's, and his whole body very decently arrayed in her late habiliments. He placed himself in the midst of the company, all of whom stood rooted to the spot, silent and awe-stricken, awaiting the dreadful scene that might ensue. The wrinkles in his countenance certainly bore no small resemblance to those in the features of the deceased, to which his very serious demeanour added not a little. Yet, after a few secret ejaculations for divine protection on the part of the guests, the facetious visitor was soon recognised by one of the brothers, the only person who had possessed courage to look the monkey in the face on his sudden entrance into the room.

Momentary prayers and exclamations were then as suddenly converted into bursts of laughter, and in a few minutes the author of all their sufferings began to resume the usual hilarity of his disposition, to exhibit his best manœuvres in the saltic art, and with the greatest politeness severally to accost the company. He evinced, however, the utmost aversion to disrobing himself of his new honours, snapping at any one who ventured to approach him, while he performed his antics in the ablest and most whimsical manner. In full dress he thus set out on his return to the castle, meeting with reiterated plaudits as he passed along the streets. In this state he was welcomed home by the domestics of the castle, producing infinite diversion among the courtiers, and all those who witnessed his exploits. Nor did the two brothers punish him for his involuntary fault; rather kindly permitting him to return to his old haunts, where he feasted and frolicked away his days, until he attained to a happy and respectable old age.

LUIGI DA PORTO

1485-1529

THE STORY OF ROMEO AND JULIET

AT the period when Bartolommeo della Scala, a gentle and accomplished prince, presided over the destinies of Verona, there flourished two noble but rival families, whose exasperation against each other was carried to the utmost extreme. The name of one of these was the Cappelletti, that of the other the Montecchi ; and both families, we are told, were equally powerful and wealthy, abounding in friends and relatives, and highly favoured in Verona, under the above-mentioned prince.

Whether of a private or a public nature, the feud which arose between them was of a very ferocious and fatal character, various partisans on both sides falling victims to its rage. Nor was it until weary of mutual wrongs, and awed by the repeated commands and entreaties of their prince, that they were induced to enter into such terms as to meet or to address each other peaceably without apprehension of further violence and bloodshed. But daily becoming more reconciled, it happened that a festival was to be given by Messer Antonio, the head of the house of the Cappelletti, a man of gay and joyous character, who made the most magnificent preparations to receive all the chief families in the city.

At one of these assemblies there one evening appeared a youth of the Montecchi family, who followed thither some lady whom he was desirous, as lovers often are, of accompanying in person (no less than in mind) upon such occasions of general festivity. He had a noble and commanding person, with elegant and accomplished manners ; and he had no sooner withdrawn his mask, screening himself in the character of a wood-nymph, than every eye was turned with admiration on his beauty, which appeared to surpass even that of the most beautiful ladies present. But he more especially attracted the attention of an only daughter of Messer Antonio, whose charms both of mind and person were unrivalled throughout the whole city.

Such was the impression she received at his appearance, that from

the moment their eyes first met she found that she was no longer mistress of her own feelings. She saw him retire into a distant part of the assembly, seldom coming forward either in the dance or in converse with others, bearing himself like one who kept a jealous watch over some beloved object whom he would fain have held aloof from the joyous scene. Such a thought struck a chill to her heart, as she had heard he was a youth of warm and animated manners.

About the approach of midnight, towards the conclusion of the ball, was struck up the dance of the torch, or of the hat, whichever we choose to call it, usually proposed with us before the breaking up of the feast. While the company stand round in a circle, each dancer takes his lady, and the lady him, changing partners as they please. As it went round, the noble youth was led out by a lady who chanced to place him near the enamoured daughter of Messer Antonio. On the other side of her stood a youth named Marcuccio Guercio, whose hand, ever cold to the touch, happened to come in contact with the fair lady's palm ; and soon after Romeo Montecchi, being on her left hand, took it in his, as was customary. On which the lady, anxious to hear his voice, said :

" Welcome to my side, Messer Romeo."

And he, observing her eyes were fixed upon his, awaiting his reply, and delighted at the tone of her voice, returned :

" How ! am I indeed then welcome ? "

" Yes, and I ought to thank you," she returned, smiling, " since my left hand is warmed by your touch, whilst that of Marcuccio freezes my right."

Assuming a little more confidence, Romeo again replied :

" If your hand, lady, feels the warmth of mine, my heart no less has kindled warm at your eyes."

A short bright smile was the only answer to this, except that in a lower tone, as fearful of being seen or heard, she half whispered back :

" I vow, O Romeo, there is no lady here whom I think nearly so handsome as you seem to me."

Fascinated by her sweet address, Romeo, with still greater warmth, replied :

" Whatever I may be, I only wish you, sweet lady, to hold me ever at your service."

When the festival broke up, and Romeo had retired to his chamber, dwelling on the harsh usage of his former love, from whose eyes he had drunk softness mixed with too much scorn, he resolved to give his soul wholly, even to the fair foe of his father's house. She, on the other hand, had thought of little else since she left him than of the supreme felicity she should enjoy in obtaining so noble a youth for her lord. Yet when she reverted to the deadly enmity which had so long reigned between the two houses, her fears over-

powered the gentler feelings of her soul, and unable wholly to subdue them, she inveighed against her own folly in the following words :

"Wretch that I am ! what enchantment thus drags me to my ruin ? Without hope or guide, O how shall I escape ? for Romeo loves me not. Alas ! he perhaps feels nothing but hatred against our house, and would perhaps only seek my shame. And were it possible he should think of taking me for his wedded wife, my father would never consent to bestow my hand."

Then, revolving other feelings in her mind, she flattered herself that their attachment might become the means of further reconciliation between the houses, even now wearied with their mutual feuds ; and, "Oh !" she exclaimed, "what a blissful means of changing foes into relatives !"

Fixed in this resolve, she again met Romeo with eyes of softness and regard. Mutually animated with equal ardour and admiration, the loved image was fixed so deeply in their imagination, that they could no longer refrain from seeing each other ; and sometimes at the windows and sometimes in the church, they sought with avidity every occasion to express their mutual passion through their eyes, and neither of them seemed to enjoy rest out of the presence of the beloved object. But chiefly Romeo, fired at the sight of her exquisite charms and manners, braved all risks for the pleasure of having her near him ; and he would frequently pass the greatest part of the night around her house, beneath her windows, or, scaling the walls, force his way to the balcony that commanded a view of her chamber, without the knowledge either of herself or others ; and there he would sit for hours, gazing and listening his soul away, enamoured of her looks and voice. He would afterwards throw himself listlessly to sleep, careless of returning home, in the woods or in the roads.

But one evening, as love would have it, the moon shining out more brightly than usual, the adventurous Romeo was discovered by his lady, as she opened the casement, on the balcony. Imagining that it might be someone else, he retreated, when, catching a glimpse of his figure, she gently called to him :

"Wherefore, O Romeo, come you hither ?"

"It is the will of love : therefore do I come," he replied.

"And if you should be found here, Romeo, know you it will be sudden death ?"

"Too well I do, dear lady ; and I doubt not it will happen so some night, if you refuse me your aid. But as I must at some time die, wherever I may be, I would rather yield my breath here as near you as I dare, with whom I would ever choose to live, did Heaven and you consent."

To which words the lady replied, "Believe me, Romeo, it is not I

who would forbid thee to remain honourably at my side ; it is thou, and the enmity thou and thine bear us, that stand between us twain."

" Yet can I truly aver," replied the youth, " that the dearest hope I have long indulged has been to make you mine ; and if you had equal wishes, on you alone it would rest to make me for ever yours : no hand of man, believe me, love, should sunder us again."

On saying this, they agreed on further means to meet again, and converse much longer some future evening ; and they retired, full of each other, to rest.

The noble youth having frequently in this way held appointments with her, one winter's evening, while the snow fell thick and fast about him, he called to her from the usual spot :

" Ah, Juliet, Juliet ! how long will you see me thus languishing in vain ? Do you feel nothing for me, who through these cold nights, exposed to the stormy weather, wait on the cold ground to behold you ? "

" Alas ! alas ! I do indeed pity you," returned a sweet voice, " but what would you that I should do ? often have I besought you to go away."

" No, no," returned Romeo, " not away : and therefore, gentle lady, deign to give me refuge in your chamber from these bitter winds."

Turning towards him with a somewhat scornful voice, the lady reproached him :

" Romeo, I love you as much as it is possible for woman to love , therefore it is that you ask me this ; your worth has led me farther than I ought to go. But, cruel as you are, if you dream that you can enjoy my love by long prevailing suit in the manner you imagine, lay such thoughts aside, for you deceive yourself, Montecchi. And as I will no longer see you nightly perilling your life for me, I frankly tell you, Romeo, that if you please to take me as I am, I will joyfully become your wife, giving myself up wholly to your will, ready to follow you over the world wherever you may think best."

" And this," replied the gentle youth, " is all I have so long wished ; now then let it be done ! "

" So let it be, even as you will," cried Juliet ; " only permit the Friar Lorenzo da San Francesco, my confessor, first to knit our hands, if you wish me wholly and happily to become yours."

" Am I to suppose, then, that Friar Lorenzo, my love, is acquainted with the secret of your breast ? "

" Yes, Romeo," returned Juliet, " and he will be ready to grant us what we request of him " ; and here, having fixed upon the proper measures, they again took leave of each other.

The friar, who belonged to the minor order of Osservanza, was a

very learned man, well skilled no less in natural than in magical arts, and was extremely intimate with Romeo, in whom he had found it necessary to confide on an occasion in which he might otherwise have forfeited his reputation, which he was very desirous of maintaining with the vulgar. He had fixed upon Romeo in his emergency, as the most brave and prudent gentleman he knew to trust with the affair he had in hand. To him only he unbosomed his whole soul ; and Romeo, having now recourse to him in his turn, acquainted him with his resolution of making the lovely daughter of Messer Antonio as quickly as possible his wedded wife, and that they had together fixed upon him as the secret instrument and witness of their nuptials, and afterwards as the medium of their reconciliation with her father.

The friar immediately signified his consent, no less because he ventured not to oppose or disoblige the lover, than because he believed it might be attended with happy results ; in which case he would be likely to derive great honour from the heads of both houses, as the means of their reconciliation.

In the meanwhile, it being the season of Lent, the fair Juliet, under semblance of going to confession, sought the residence of Friar Francesco, and having entered into one of the confessionals made use of by the monks, she inquired for Lorenzo, who, hearing her voice, led her along after Romeo into the convent. Then, closing the doors of the confessional, he removed an iron grate which had hitherto separated her from her lover, saying :

" I have been always glad to see you, my daughter ; but you will now be far dearer to me than ever if you wish to receive Messer Romeo here as your husband."

To which Juliet answered that there was nothing she so much wished as that she might lawfully become his wife, and that she had therefore hastened thither, in order that before Heaven and him she might take those vows which love and honour required, and which the friar must witness, as her trust in him was great.

Then, in the presence of the priest, who performed the ceremony under the seal of confession, Romeo espoused the fair young Juliet ; and having concluded how they were to meet each other again at night, exchanging a single kiss, they took leave of the friar, who remained in the confessional awaiting the arrival of penitents. Having thus secretly obtained the object of their wishes, the youthful Romeo and his bride for many days enjoyed the most unalloyed felicity, hoping at the same time for a favourable occasion to become reconciled to her father, in acquainting him with their marriage.

But Fortune, as if envious of their supreme happiness, just at this time revived the old deadly feud between the houses in such a way, that in a few days, neither of them wishing to yield to the other, the Montecchi and the Cappelletti meeting together, from words pro-

ceeded to blows. Desirous to avoid giving any mortal hurts to his sweet wife's relatives, Romeo had the sorrow of beholding his own party either wounded or driven from the streets, and incensed with passion against Tebaldo Cappelletti, the most formidable of his adversaries, he struck him dead at his feet with a single blow, and put his companions to flight, terrified at the loss of their chief. The homicide had been witnessed by too many to remain long a secret, and the complaint being brought before the Prince, the Cappelletti threw the blame exclusively on Romeo, who was sentenced by the council to perpetual banishment from Verona.

It is easier for those who truly love to imagine than it is here to describe the sensations of the young bride on receiving these tidings. She wept long and bitterly, refusing to hear any consolation ; and her grief was deepened by the reflection that she could share it with no one. Romeo, on the other hand, regretted leaving his country on her account alone, and resolving to take a sorrowful farewell of the object of all his soul's wishes, he had again recourse to the assistance of the friar, who despatched a faithful follower of Romeo's father to apprise his wife of the time and place of meeting, and thither she eagerly repaired. Retiring together into the confessional, they there wept bitterly over their misfortune. The young bride at length, checking her tears, exclaimed in an accent of despair :

" I cannot bear to live ! What will my life be without you ? Oh, let me fly with you ; wherever you go I will follow, a faithful and loving servant. I will cast these long tresses away, and by none shall you be served so well, so truly, as by me."

" No, never let it be said," replied Romeo, " that you accompanied me in other guise than in that of a cherished and honoured bride. Yet were it not that I feel assured that our affairs will soon improve, and that the strife between our two families will very shortly cease, indeed I could not bear, my love, to leave you. We shall not long be divided, and my thoughts, sweet Juliet, will be ever with you. And should we not be quickly restored to each other, it will then be time to fix how we are to meet again."

So, after having wept and embraced each other again and again, they tore themselves asunder, his wife entreating that he would remain as near her as possible, and by no means go so far as Rome or Florence.

After concealing himself for some time in the monastery of Friar Lorenzo, Romeo set out more dead than alive for Mantua, but not before he had agreed with the servant of the lady that he was to be informed, through the friar, of every particular that might occur during his absence ; and he further instructed the servant, as he valued his protection and rewards, to obey his wife in the minutest

things which she might require of him. After her husband had departed, she gave herself up a prey to the deepest grief, a grief so incessant as to leave its traces on her beauty, and attract the attention of her mother. She tenderly loved her daughter, and affectionately inquiring into the cause of her affliction, she merely received vague excuses in reply.

"But you are always in tears, my daughter," she continued; "what is it that can affect you thus? Tell me, for you are dear to me as my own life, and if it depend upon me, you shall no longer weep."

Then, imagining that her daughter might probably wish to bestow her hand in marriage, yet be afraid of avowing her wishes, she determined to speak to her husband on the subject; and thus, in the hope of promoting her health and happiness, she pursued the very means that led to her destruction.

She informed Messer Antonio that she had observed, for many days past, that something was preying on their daughter's mind, that she was no longer like the same creature, and that although she had used every means to obtain her confidence as to the source of her affliction, it had been all in vain. She then urged her suspicions that Juliet perhaps wished to marry, but that, like a discreet girl as she certainly was, she was averse to declare her feelings.

"So I think, Messer Antonio, we had better without more delay make choice for our daughter of a noble husband. Juliet has already completed her eighteenth year, on St. Euphemia's Day; and when they have advanced much beyond this period, the beauty of women, so far from improving, is rather on the wane. Besides," continued her mother, "it is not well to keep girls too long at home, though our Juliet has always been an excellent child. I am aware you have already fixed upon her dower, and we have nothing to do but to select a proper object for her love."

Messer Antonio agreed with his lady, and highly commended the virtues and the prudence of his daughter. Not many days afterwards they proposed and entered into a treaty of marriage between the Count of Lodrone and their daughter. When it was on the point of being concluded, the lady, hoping to surprise her daughter with the agreeable tidings, bade her now rejoice, for that in a very few days she would be happily settled in marriage with a noble youth, and that she must no longer grieve, for it would take place with her father's consent and that of all her friends.

On hearing these words, Juliet burst into a flood of tears, while her mother endeavoured to console her with the hope of being happily settled in life within the course of eight days.

"You will then become the wife of Count Lodrone; nay, do not weep, for it is really true: will you not be happy, Juliet, then?"

"No, no, my dear mother, I shall never be happy."

"Then what can be the matter with you? What do you want? Only tell me; I will do anything you wish."

"Then I would wish to die, mother; nothing else is left me now."

Her mother then first became aware that she was the victim of some deep-seated passion, and saying little more, she left her. In the evening she related to her husband what had passed, at which he testified great displeasure, saying that it would be necessary to have the affair examined into before venturing to proceed further with the Count. And fearful lest any blame might attach to his family, he soon after sent for Juliet, with the intention of consulting her on the proposed marriage.

"It is my wish, my dear Juliet, to form an honourable connection for you in marriage. Will you be satisfied with it?"

After remaining silent for some moments, his daughter replied:

"No, dear father, I cannot be satisfied."

"Am I to suppose, then, that you wish to take the veil, daughter?"

"Indeed I know not what"—and with these words out gushed a flood of bitter tears.

"But this I know," returned her father, "you shall give your hand to Count Lodrone, and therefore trouble yourself no further."

"Never, never!" cried Juliet, still weeping bitterly.

On this Messer Antonio threatened her with his heaviest displeasure did she again venture to dispute his will, commanding her immediately to reveal the cause of her unhappiness. And when he could obtain no other reply than sobs and tears, he quitted the apartment in a violent passion, unable to penetrate into her motives, leaving her with her mother alone. The wretched bride had already acquainted the servant intrusted with their secret, whose name was Pietro, with everything which had passed between herself and her parents, taking him to witness that she would sooner die than become the wife of any lord but Romeo. And this the good Pietro had carefully conveyed through the friar to the ears of the banished man, who had written to her, encouraging her to persevere, and by no means to betray the secret of their love, as he was then taking measures, within less than ten days, to bear her from her father's house.

Messer Antonio and his lady Giovanna being unable in the meanwhile, either by threats or kindness, to discover their daughter's objections to the marriage, or whether she was attached to another, determined to prosecute their design.

"Weep no more, girl," cried her mother, "for married you shall be, though you were to take one of the Montecchi by the hand, which I am sure you will never be compelled to do!"

Fresh sobs and tears at these words burst from the poor girl, which only served to hasten her parents' preparations for her nuptials. Her despair was terrible when she heard the day named, and calling upon death to save her, she rushed out of her chamber, and repairing as fast as possible to the convent of the friar, in whom, next to Romeo, she trusted, and from whom she had received tidings of her husband, she revealed to him the cause of her anguish, often interrupted by her tears. She then conjured him, by the friendship and obligations which he owed to Romeo, to assist her in this her utter need.

"Alas ! of what use can I be," replied the friar, "when your two houses are even now so violently opposed to each other ?"

"But I know, father, that you are a learned and experienced man, and you can assist me in many ways if you please. If you should refuse me everything else, at least, however, grant me this. My nuptials are even now preparing in my father's palace ; he is now gone out of the city to give orders at the villa on the Mantuan road, whither they are about to carry me, that I may there be compelled to receive the Count, without a chance of opposition, as he is to meet me on my arrival at the place. Give me, therefore, poison, to free me at once from the grief and shame of exposing the wife of Romeo to such a scene. Give me poison, or I will myself plunge a dagger into my bosom !"

The friar, on hearing these desperate intentions, and aware how deeply he was implicated with Romeo, who might become his worst enemy were he not in some way to obviate the danger, turning to Juliet, said :

"You know, my daughter, that I confess a great portion of the people here, and am respected by all, no testament, no reconciliation taking place without my mediation. I am therefore careful of giving rise to any suspicions which might affect me, and should especially wish to conceal my interference in an affair like the present. I would not incur such a scandal for all the treasure in the world. But, as I am attached both to yourself and Romeo, I will exert myself in your favour in such a way as I believe no one ever before did. You must first, however, take a vow that you will never betray to others the secret I now intrust you with."

"Speak, speak boldly, father," cried Juliet, "and give me the poison, for I will inform nobody."

"I will give you no poison," returned the friar ; "young and beautiful as you are, it would be too deep a sin. But if you possess courage to execute what I shall propose, I trust I may be able to deliver you safely into the hands of Romeo. You are aware that the family vault of the Cappelletti lies beyond this church in the cemetery of our convent. Now I will give you a certain powder,

which, when you have taken it, will throw you into a deep slumber of eight and forty hours, and during that time you will be to all appearance dead, not even the most skilful physicians being able to detect a spark of life remaining. In this state you will be interred in the vault of the Cappelletti, and at a fitting season I will be in readiness to take you away, and bring you to my own cell, where you can stay until I go, which will not be long, to the chapter ; after which, disguised in a monk's dress, I will bear you myself to your husband. But tell me, are you not afraid of being near the corpse of Tebaldo, your cousin, so recently interred in the same place ? ”

With serene and joyful looks the young bride returned, “ No, father ; for if by such means I can ever reach my Romeo, I would face not this alone, but the terrors of hell itself.”

“ This is well ; let it be done,” cried the friar ; “ but first write with your own hand an exact account of the whole affair to Romeo, lest by any mischance, supposing you dead, he may be impelled by his despair to do some desperate deed ; for I am sure he is passionately attached to you. There are always some of my brethren who have occasion to go to Mantua, where your husband resides : let me have your letter to him, and I will send it by a faithful messenger.”

Having said this, the good monk, leaving the lady in the confessional, returned to his cell, but soon came back bringing a small vase with the powder in it, saying :

“ Drink this, mixed with simple water, about midnight, and fear not. In two hours after it will begin to take effect, and I doubt not but our design will be crowned with success. But haste, and forget not to write the letter, as I have directed you, to Romeo, for it is of great importance.”

Securing the powder, the fair bride hastened joyfully home to her mother, saying :

“ Truly, dear mother, Friar Lorenzo is one of the best confessors in the world. He has so kindly advised me that I am quite recovered from my late unhappiness.”

Overjoyed on perceiving her daughter's cheerfulness, the Lady Giovanna replied :

“ And you shall return his kindness, my dear girl, with interest ; his poor brethren shall never be in want of alms.”

Juliet's recovered spirits now banished every suspicion from the mind of her parents of her previous attachment to another, and they believed that some unhappy incident had given rise to the strange and melancholy disposition they had observed. They would now have been glad to withdraw their promise of bestowing her hand upon the Count, but they had already proceeded so far that they could not, without much difficulty, retreat. Her lover was desirous

that some one of his friends should see her ; and her mother, Lady Giovanna, being somewhat delicate in her health, it was resolved that her daughter, accompanied by two of her aunts, should be carried to the villa at a short distance from the city—a step to which she made no opposition.

She accordingly went ; and imagining that her father would immediately on her arrival insist upon the marriage, she took care to secure the powder given to her by the friar. At the approach of midnight, calling one of her favourite maids, brought up with her from her childhood, she requested her to bring her a glass of water, observing that she felt very thirsty ; and as she drank it in the presence of the maid and one of her aunts, she exclaimed that her father should never bestow her hand upon the Count against her own consent. These simple women, though they had observed her throw the powder into the water, which she said was to refresh her, suspected nothing further and went to rest. When the servant had retired with the light, her young mistress rose from her bed, dressed herself, and again lay down, composing her limbs as if she were never more to rise, with her hands crossed upon her breast, awaiting the dreaded result.

In little more than two hours she lay to all appearance dead, and in this state she was discovered the next morning. The maid and her aunt, unable to awake her, feeling that she was already quite cold, and recollecting the powder, the strange expressions she had used, and, above all, seeing her dressed, began to scream aloud, supposing her to have poisoned herself. On this, the cries of her own maid, who loved her, were terrible.

“ True, too true, dear lady : you said that your father should never marry you against your will. Alas ! you asked me for the very water which was to occasion your death. Wretch that I am ! And have you indeed left me, and left me thus ? With my own hands I gave you the fatal cup, which, with yours, will have caused the death of your father, your mother, and us all. Ah ! why did you not take me with you, who have always so dearly loved you in life ? ”

And saying this she threw herself by the side of her young mistress, embracing her cold form. Messer Antonio, hearing a violent uproar, hastened, trembling, to ascertain the cause, and the first object he beheld was his daughter stretched out in her chamber a corpse. Although he believed her gone beyond recovery, when he heard what she had drunk, he immediately sent to Verona for a very experienced physician, who having carefully observed and examined his daughter, declared that she had died of the effects of the poison more than six hours before.

The wretched father, on hearing his worst fears confirmed, was

overwhelmed with grief ; and the same tidings reaching the distracted mother, suddenly deprived her of all consciousness. When she was at length restored, she tore her hair, and calling upon her daughter's name, filled the air with her shrieks.

"She is gone ! the only sweet solace of my aged days. Cruel, cruel ! thou hast left me without even giving thy poor mother a last farewell ! At least I might have drunk thy last words and sighs, and closed thine eyes in peace. Let my women come about me, let them assist me, that I may die ! if they have any pity left, they will kill me ; far better so to die than of a lingering death of grief. O God ! in Thy infinite mercy take me away, for my life will be a burden to me now !"

Her women then came round her, and bore her to the couch, still weeping, and refusing all the consolation they could offer to her. The body of Juliet was in the meantime carried to Verona, and consigned with extraordinary ceremonies, amidst the lamentations of a numerous train of friends and relatives, to the vault in the cemetery of San Francesco, where the last rites to the dead were discharged.

The friar having occasion to be absent from the city, had, according to his promise, confided Juliet's letter to Romeo to the hands of one of his brethren going to Mantua. On arriving, he called several times at the house without having the good fortune to meet with Romeo, and, unwilling to trust such a letter to others, he retained it in his own hands, until Pietro, hearing of the death of Juliet, and not finding the friar in the city, resolved to bear the unhappy tidings to his master.

He arrived in Mantua the following night, and meeting with Romeo, who had not yet received the letter from the priest, he related to him, with tears in his eyes, the death of his young bride, whose burial he had himself witnessed. The hue of death stole over the features of Romeo as he proceeded with the sad story ; and, drawing his sword, he was about to stab himself on the spot, had he not been prevented by force.

"It is well," he cried, "but I shall not long survive the lady of my soul, whom I valued more than life ! O Juliet, Juliet ! it is thy husband who doomed thee to death ! I came not, as I promised, to bear thee from thy cruel father, whilst thou, to preserve thy sweet faith unbroken, hast died for me ; and shall I, through fear of death, survive alone ? No, this shall never be !"

Then, throwing a dark cloak which he wore over Pietro's shoulders, he cried, "Away, away ! leave me !"

Romeo closed the doors after him, and preferring every other evil to that of life, only considered the best manner of getting rid of it. At last he assumed the dress of a peasant, and taking out a species of poison which he had always carried with him, to use in case of

emergency, he placed it under the sleeve of his coat, and immediately set out on his return to Verona. Journeying on with wild and melancholy thoughts, he now defied his fate, hoping to fall by the hands of justice, or to lay himself down in the vault by the side of her he loved and die.

In this resolution, on the evening of the following day after her interment, he arrived at Verona without being discovered by any one. The same night, as soon as the city became hushed, he resorted to the convent of the Frati Minori, where the tombs of the Cappelletti lay. The church was situated in the Cittadella, where the monks at that time resided, although, for some reason, they have since left it for the suburb of San Zeno, now called Santo Bernardino, and the Cittadella was formerly, indeed, inhabited by San Francesco himself. Near the outer walls of this place there were then placed a number of large monuments such as we see round many churches, and beneath one of these was the ancient sepulchre of all the Cappelletti, in which the beautiful bride then lay.

Romeo approaching near not long after midnight, and possessing great strength, removed the heavy covering by force, and with some wooden stakes which he had brought with him, he propped it up to prevent it from closing again until he wished it; and he then entered the tomb and replaced the covering. The lamp he carried cast a lurid light around, while his eyes wandered in search of the loved object, which, bursting open the living tomb, he quickly found. He beheld the features of the beautiful Juliet now mingled with a heap of lifeless dust and bones, on which a sudden tide of sorrow sprung into his eyes, and amidst bitter sobs he thus spoke:

"O eyes, which while our loves to Heaven were dear, shone sweetly upon mine! O sweeter mouth, a thousand and a thousand times so fondly kissed by me alone, and rich in honeyed words! O bosom, in which my whole heart lay treasured up, alas! all closed and mute and cold I find ye now! My hapless wife, what hath love done for thee, but led thee hither? And why so soon two wretched lovers perish? I had not looked for this when hope and passion first whispered of other things. But I have lived to witness even this!" and he pressed his lips to her mouth and bosom, mingling his kisses with his tears.

"Walls of the dead!" he cried, "why fall ye not around me and crush me into dust? Yet, as death is in the power of all, it is a despicable thing to wish yet fear it too."

Then, taking out the poison from under his vest, he thus continued:

"By what strange fatality am I brought to die in the sepulchre of my enemies, some of whom this hand hath slain? But as it is pleasant to die near those we love, now, my beloved, let me die!"

Then, seizing the fatal vial, he poured its whole contents into his frame, and catching the fair body of Juliet in his arms in a wild embrace, "Still so sweet," he cried, "dear limbs, mine, only mine! And if yet thy pure spirit live, my Juliet, let it look from its seat of bliss to witness and forgive my cruel death; as I could not delighted live with thee, it is not forbidden me with thee to die"; and winding his arms about her, he awaited his final doom.

The hour was now arrived when, the vital powers of the slumbering lady reviving, and subduing the icy coldness of the poison, she would awake. Thus straitly folded in the last embraces of Romeo, she suddenly recovered her senses, and uttering a deep sigh, she cried:

"Alas! where am I? in whose arms, whose kisses? Oh, unbind me, wretch that I am! Base friar, is it thus you keep your word to Romeo, thus lead me to his arms?"

Great was her husband's surprise to feel Juliet alive in his embrace. Recalling the idea of Pygmalion,

"Do you know me, sweet wife?" he cried. "It is your love, your Romeo, hither come to die with you. I came alone and secretly from Mantua to find your place of rest."

Finding herself within the sepulchre and in the arms of Romeo, Juliet would not at first give credit to her senses; but, springing out of his arms, gazed a moment eagerly on his face, and the next fell on his neck with a torrent of tears and kisses.

"O Romeo, Romeo! what madness brings you hither? Were not my letters which I sent you by the friar enough to tell you of my feigned death, and that I should shortly be restored to you?"

The wretched youth, aware of the whole calamity, then gave way to his despair.

"Beyond all other griefs that lovers ever bore, Romeo, thy lot has been! My life, my soul, I never had thy letters!"

And he told her the piteous tale which he had heard from the lips of her servant, and that, concluding she was dead, he had hastened to keep her company, and had already drunk the deadly draught. At these last words, his unhappy bride, uttering a wild scream, began to beat her breast and tear her hair, and then in a state of distraction she threw herself by the side of Romeo, already lying on the ground, and, pouring over him a deluge of tears, imprinted her last kisses on his lips. All pale and trembling, she cried:

"Oh, my Romeo! will you die in my sight, and I too the occasion of your death? Must I live even a moment after you? Ah, would that I could give my life for yours! Would that I alone might die!"

In a faint and dying tone her husband replied:

"If my love and truth were ever dear to you, my Juliet, live, for my sake live; for it is sweet to know that you will then be often

thinking of him who now dies for you, with his eyes still fixed on yours."

"Die ! yes ! you die for the death which in me was only feigned ! What, therefore, should I do for this your real, cruel death ? I only grieve that I have no means of accompanying you, and hate myself that I must linger on earth till I obtain them. But it shall not be long before the wretch who caused your death shall follow you " ; and uttering these words with pain, she swooned away upon his body. On again reviving, she felt she was catching the last breath, which now came thick and fast, from the breast of her husband.

Friar Lorenzo, in the meanwhile, aware of the supposed death and of the interment of Juliet, and knowing that the termination of her slumber was near, proceeded with a faithful companion about an hour before sunrise to the monument. On approaching the place, he heard her sobs and cries, and saw the light of a lamp through an aperture in the sepulchre. Surprised at this, he imagined that Juliet must have secreted the light in the monument, and awaking and finding no one there, had thus begun to weep and bewail herself. But on opening the sepulchre with the help of his companion, he beheld the weeping and distracted Juliet holding her dying husband in her arms, on which he immediately said :

"What ! did you think, my daughter, I should leave you here to die ? "

To which she only answered with another burst of sorrow :

"No ! away ! I only fear lest I should be made to live. Away, and close our sepulchre over our heads ; here let me die. Or, in the name of pity, lend me a dagger, that I may strike it into my bosom and escape from my woes. Ah, cruel father ! well hast thou fulfilled thy promise, well delivered to Romeo his letters, and borne me safely to him ! See, he is lying dead in my arms " , and she repeated the fatal tale.

Thunderstruck at these words, the friar gazed upon the dying Romeo, exclaiming with horror :

"My friend, my Romeo ! alas ! what chance hath torn thee from us ? Thy Juliet calls thee, Romeo ; look up and hope. Thou art lying in her beauteous bosom and wilt not speak."

On hearing her loved name, he raised his languid eyes, heavy with death, and fixing them on her for a short space, closed them again. The next moment, turning himself round upon his face in a last struggle, he expired.

Thus wretchedly fell the noble youth, long lamented over by his fair bride, till, on the approach of day, the friar tenderly inquired what she would wish to do.

"To be left to die where I am," was the reply.

"Do not, daughter, say this, but come with me ; for though I

scarcely know in what way to proceed, I can perhaps find means of obtaining a refuge for you in some convent, where you may address your prayers to Heaven for your own and for your husband's sake."

"I desire you to do nothing for me," replied Juliet, "except this one thing, which I trust, for the sake of his memory," pointing to the body of Romeo, "you will do. Never breathe a syllable to any one living of our unhappy death, that our bodies may rest here together for ever in peace. And should our sad loves come to light, I pray you will beseech both our parents to permit our remains to continue mingled together in this sepulchre, as in love and in death we were still one."

Then, turning again towards the body of Romeo, whose head she held sustained upon her lap, and whose eyes she had just closed, bathing his cold features with her tears, she addressed him as if he had been in life :

"What shall I now do, my dear lord, since you have deserted me? What can I do but follow you? for nothing else is left me : death itself shall not keep me from you."

Having said this, and feeling the full weight of her irreparable loss in the death of her noble husband, resolute to die, she drew in her breath, and retaining it for some time, suddenly uttered a loud shriek and fell dead by her lover's side. The friar, perceiving that she was indeed dead, was seized with such a degree of terror and surprise, that, unable to come to any resolution, he sat down with his companion in the sepulchre bewailing the destiny of the lovers. At this time some of the officers of the police, being in search of a notorious robber, arrived at the spot, and perceiving a light and the sound of voices, they straightway ran to the place, and seizing upon the priests, inquired into their business.

Friar Lorenzo, recognising some of these men, was overpowered with shame and fear ; but assuming a lofty voice, exclaimed :

"Back, sirs, I am not the man you take me for. What you are in want of you must search for elsewhere."

Their conductor then came forward, saying :

"We wish to be informed why the monument of the Cappelletti is thus violated by night, when a young lady of the family has been so recently interred here. And were I not acquainted with your excellent character, Friar Lorenzo, I should say you had come hither to despoil the dead."

The priests, having extinguished the lamp, then replied, "We shall not render an account of our business to you ; it is not your affair."

"That is true," replied the other ; "but I must report it to the Prince."

The friar, with a feeling of despair, then cried out, "Say what

you please"; and closing up the entrance into the tomb he went into the church with his companion.

The morning was somewhat advanced when the friars disengaged themselves from the officers, one of whom soon related to the Cappelletti the whole of this strange affair. They, knowing that Friar Lorenzo had been very intimate with Romeo, brought him before the Prince, entreating that, if there were no other means, he might be compelled by torture to confess his reason for opening the sepulchre of the Cappelletti.

The Prince, having placed him under a strict guard, proceeded to interrogate him wherefore he had visited the tomb of the Cappelletti, as he was resolved to discover the truth.

"I will confess everything very freely," exclaimed the friar. "I was the confessor of the daughter of Messer Antonio, lately deceased in so very strange a manner. I loved her for her worth, and being compelled to be absent at the time of her interment, I went to offer up certain prayers over her remains, which, when nine times repeated by my beads, have power to liberate her spirit from the pangs of purgatory. And because few appreciate or understand such matters, the wretches assert that I went there for the purpose of despoiling the body. But I trust I am better known. This poor gown and girdle are enough for me, and I would not take a mite from all the treasures of the earth, much less the shrouds of the departed. They do me great wrong to suspect me of this crime."

The Prince would have been satisfied with this explanation, had it not been for the interference of other monks, who, jealous of the friar, and hearing that he had been found in the monument, examined further, and found the dead body of Romeo, a fact which was immediately made known to the Prince while still speaking to the friar. This appeared incredible to every one present, and excited the utmost amazement through the city.

The friar, then aware that it would be in vain farther to conceal his knowledge of the affair, fell at the feet of His Excellency, crying:

"Pardon, oh pardon, most noble Prince! I have said what is not truth, yet neither for any evil purpose nor for love of gain have I said it, but to preserve my faith entire, which I promised to two deceased and unhappy lovers."

On this the friar was compelled to repeat the whole of the preceding tale. The Prince, moved almost to tears as he listened, set out with a vast train of people to the monument of the family, and having ordered the bodies of the lovers to be placed in the Church of San Francesco, he summoned their fathers and friends to attend. There was now a fresh burst of sorrow springing from a double source. Although the parties had been the bitterest enemies, they embraced one another in tears, and the scene before them suddenly

wrought that change in their hearts and feelings which neither the threats of their Prince nor the prayers of their friends had been able to accomplish. Their hatred became extinguished in the mingled blood of their unhappy children. A noble monument was erected to their memory, on which was inscribed the occasion of their death, and their bodies were entombed together with great splendour and solemnity, and wept over no less by their friends and relatives than by the whole afflicted city. Such a fearful close had the loves of Romeo and Juliet, such as you have heard, and as it was related to me by Pellegrino da Verona.

AGNOLO FIRENZUOLA

1493-1548

THE SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF MESSER NICCOLO

IN ancient days, it is said, there flourished in Tuscany two noble citizens, both extremely wealthy, and both descended from good families. Not satisfied, however, like too many, with the reputation acquired by their ancestors, nor esteeming the works of others as any kind of ornament to themselves, they vied with each other in conferring distinction upon their nobility by their actions, rather than in assuming it from the dignity of their birth. Thus in their correspondence, their manners, and the whole tenor of their life and transactions, they procured for themselves a high reputation throughout Florence, which was not a little enhanced by the mutual esteem and more than fraternal kindness that was invariably observed to exist between them. They were generally seen in company together, their pursuits were nearly congenial, and their days appeared to flow at once in so noble and so pure a stream, that Fortune herself seemed to respect their virtues and their happiness.

Her smiles, however, as of old, were delusive ; for Niccolo degli Albizi, one of these two friends, hearing of the decease of an uncle, his mother's brother, who died extremely rich in Valencia, leaving Niccolo, in default of children, his sole heir, was under the necessity of making a voyage into Spain. Mentioning his intention to his friend Coppo, the latter directly proposed, as he expected, to accompany him. Having made their arrangements, therefore, they were just upon the point of departure, when, unfortunately, Coppo's father was seized with a mortal distemper, which terminated his existence in a few days, a circumstance that left Niccolo no alternative but that of giving up his voyage or proceeding alone.

Adopting the latter resolution, after taking a sorrowful and affectionate leave, he bent his course towards Genoa, and there took his passage in a Genoese vessel upon the point of sailing for a Spanish port. It was now that his fortune first began to wear a different

aspect ; for the ship had hardly made fifty leagues from shore, when about sunset the sea was observed to become white and foamy, presenting at the same time various other signs of an approaching tempest. And before the master of the vessel had completed his orders, she was enveloped in a torrent of rain, while the fierce hurricane rendered her unmanageable, bearing her onwards in a shroud of mist and darkness that defied the eye of the oldest navigator.

This soon became, if possible, more horribly appalling by contrast with the lurid flashes of lightning that broke athwart the gloom, consigning them again to utter darkness. Images of the most terrific nature haunted the fancy of the crew, thus suddenly deprived of all external objects ; and it was piteous to think of the efforts of those who retained heart enough to struggle with the adverse elements, while they often adopted, in hope of rescue, measures that tended, perhaps, only to accelerate their own destruction. Even the stentorian voice of the master could no longer be heard through the storm, while the straining and rending of the masts and sails, intermingled with occasional cries, and the deep volleys of thunder rolling in the distance, formed altogether a union of appalling sounds that struck terror to the boldest spirit.

The danger still increased, and their remaining courage dying away in their last feeble efforts, soon wholly forsook them ; for they were now borne mountains high, now plunged, as it were, into the abysses of the deep, from which the ship would again emerge, to the surprise of all, like a sea-bird from the hollow caverns of the deep. So terrific indeed, before she yielded, did the scene appear, that the hair of the boldest sailor stood on end, as he felt rather than saw the furious commingling, the utter confusion, and the wild reverberation, of heaven, air, and sea. Alas ! how hastily did the most niggardly and grasping hands consign their treasure, their richest silks and stuffs, to the remorseless deep, with all the precious metals that were first thrown overboard ; though, when lightened of her load, she only seemed to drive more madly before the winds.

The affrighted passengers, who had before sought to shun the sight of their approaching doom below, at length rushed tumultuously upon deck.

" The cabin is filling with water ! " was the cry, while every sailor who before had stood to his post then fell on his knees, and embracing his nearest friend, and joining in the general cry of *Misericordia !* appeared to consign himself to his doom.

How many who wanted comfort themselves generously tried in that bitter moment to support others yet weaker and more appalled !

How many who had seldom or never prayed were heard muttering faint and incoherent appeals to Heaven !

Some called upon the Blessed Virgin, some upon San Niccolo di

Bari, while others trusted to San Ermo ; and pilgrimages to the holy sepulchre and religious vows were abundantly poured forth in the hope of being miraculously rescued, like Jonas, from the bowels of the deep.

The libertine was even heard to make a vow of marriage ; dealers and usurers swore to make restitution ; while such few as loved the world less uttered the most tender expressions to their absent fathers mothers, children, and friends, at the same time mingling their pity for each other.

While thus employed, the mainmast with a terrific crash went into the sea, which was the signal for the vessel's parting, hardly affording time for a few of the most bold and active to seize the scattered pieces of the wreck. Niccolo, however, being among these last, supported himself with the aid of a small table, nor ever yielded his hold until he found himself thrown upon the coast of Barbary, a short way from Susa. Being there perceived by a party of fishermen, they took compassion upon him, and conducted him to a small hut belonging to them, where they restored him to animation over a large fire. Upon finding that he spoke in the Latin tongue, the fishermen, supposing him to be an infidel, and that they were not likely to catch any more valuable fish that morning, agreed to carry him instantly for sale to Tunis. There they sold him to a wealthy merchant of the name of Lagi Amet, who, liking his youthful and gentlemanlike appearance, resolved to retain him about his own person.

In this service the captive displayed so much discretion and fidelity as to merit the regard of the whole household, but, most unfortunately for his master, of one in particular, the lovely wife of Amet having been unable to behold the pleasing and handsome stranger with indifference. Possessed of the greatest beauty and accomplishments, she remarked the superiority of his manners and appearance to every other person around her, and at first taking an innocent delight in hearing the narration of his life and travels, she soon began to feel uneasy when out of his company. She would sit and hear him converse, and gaze upon him for hours, and yet so open and undisguised was her admiration, that Lagi Amet, entertaining no idea of the possibility of danger, made his beautiful lady a present of the amusing slave upon whom she bestowed so much attention. Overpowered with agitation and delight, she attempted to conceal the pleasure which such an offer gave her, and for some time succeeded in it, though she now began to be aware, when too late, of the real nature of her feelings.

In spite of her caution, she was often on the point of betraying them to the object of her regard, but the idea of the confidence reposed in her by Amet, and of bestowing her affections upon a slave, deprived her of the power of utterance. Besides the difficulties she

would have to encounter, her life, her honour, everything which she valued, would be at stake ; and frequent and long were the struggles she made against the growing passion that consumed her.

" Wretched creature that I am ! " she would exclaim, " to be so deeply sensible of those superior merits and accomplishments that I must not love, nor hardly admire, and yet all these affections are bestowed upon a slave, an outcast, and a Christian, one who, upon the first glimpse of liberty, would leave thee to weep over thine own weakness in sorrow and despair ! And how could he love me, indeed ? Could a slave love me as he loves his own liberty ? Oh, abandon the very thought ! it is alike treason against my honour and my life ! If I sacrifice myself, let it at least be for some nobler object ; let it not be said that the wife of Amet died for a slave ! But, alas ! why did I not feel and act in this way before—before I became thus tortured, lost, abandoned to passion and despair ? Besides, am I not wed—am I not already the property of another ? Yes, it is madness to pursue the path I am in, and still I feel, I know, I have not strength to abandon it. If I yield not, if I tell him not all my love and sufferings to-day, should I continue still to see and to listen to him, I only prolong the period of my ruin until to-morrow. Let me hasten, then, and acquaint him while there is yet time ; for though a foreigner and a slave, he has a noble spirit, and it is Fortune only that is to blame. She cannot rob him of those sweet and courteous manners, of that true nobility of soul that shines in every tone and look, and of all those virtues which seem to surround him with a radiant light that attracts my very soul, and which I feel sure he must possess beyond all the men I have ever seen. Can Fortune deprive him of these and of his noble birth ? No ; to be unfortunate is the common lot of all ; and even were I the next moment to become a slave, should I not still be the same I now am ? His ill fortune, therefore, ought not to make me love him the less ; and who can say I may not be the happy means of bringing him over to the true faith, while at the same time he will on that account become more passionately attached to me ? And why should a weak and wretched creature like myself attempt to master a feeling that has enslaved thousands of the wisest men upon earth ? I must at least see and speak to him, though I refrain from giving him the most distant idea of my love ! "

With these weak and dangerous sentiments, the unhappy lady, half reconciled to her fate, sought the presence of her handsome slave ; nor was it long before this was followed by an explanation, that, almost inarticulate between tears and blushes, invested Niccolo rather with the character of her lord than of her slave. Still he was long in doubt whether he ought to credit the words he heard, whether it were reality or a dream, a snare laid for his honour or the

proudest tribute that could be rendered to his worth. At first, then, he was about to check the torrent of her feelings, expressing equal surprise and alarm at what he heard ; but when he next reflected upon the many gentle tokens of her kindness and attention to him, and upon her superior sense and accomplishments beyond all the women he had ever seen, bethinking himself at the same time of the story of the Comte d'Anversa and the Queen of France, besides many others, he began to consider the whole as nothing less than actual truth.

Warmly expressing his deep gratitude for the distinction conferred upon him, and far from being insensible to her transcendent beauty and accomplishments, the enslaved Niccolo bent himself lowly at his fair mistress's feet. Yet, possessing high and honourable principles, he resolved to make her his upon no other condition than consenting to be baptised in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

The lady, who had every inclination to become a believer on these terms, finding that she had no chance of adding him to the disciples of Mohammed, readily gave her consent, sealing it at the same time with a thousand Saracenic oaths : upon which Niccolo thought it incumbent upon him to explain a little more clearly the nature of the Christian religion and what it imposed upon her. Thinking the conditions at first a little hard, she made some slight demur, proposing that they should rather both embrace the doctrines of Mohammed, which were certainly more easy and much more likely to be fulfilled.

Niccolo, however, assured her that as a Christian she was bound to observe as many duties as possible, and to pray for grace to perform such as she felt an inclination to omit ; that she must never be weary of her task ; that she must be found always watching, and not like the foolish virgins, who forgot to trim their lamps, and whose lights went out. On hearing him utter these words, she would certainly have pronounced him mad had she not already been too deeply in love. As it was, she contented herself with saying, after revolving a variety of confused ideas in her mind, " Come, you shall make me what you please " ; and accordingly she was the same day baptised, christened, confessed, received the communion, and married to Niccolo according to the rites of the Holy Church.

And so sweet in a short time did its new mysteries and duties appear to her, that being naturally possessed of superior intellect and endowments, she no longer regretted the faith of her ancestors, and began to take delight in nothing so much as having the Christian doctrines expounded to her by the voice of Niccolo.

While she thus continued making daily progress under the judicious instructions of Niccolo in a subject so important to her best interests, Niccolo's friend, Coppo, in the meanwhile had not been idle, inquiring in all directions wherever he conceived it probable that he might

have been wrecked or captured. Not content with this, he himself set out in quest of him, and arrived at Tunis just as Niccolo happened to be passing with the lady close by the place where he was seen dismounting, so that they met and recognised each other in the streets.

Niccolo testified his gratitude to Coppo for so striking a proof of his fidelity, but at the same time requested him not to execute his intention of procuring his ransom until he should hear further from him; and then giving him his address, and shaking him cordially by the hand, he accompanied his lady home. A little surprised at this occurrence, the lady inquired, with a smile, who he was and what business he could have with her slave, being particularly jealous of everything that might interfere with her own views, questions which her Christian husband answered with his usual eloquence to her entire satisfaction.

Yet, as we may easily believe, Niccolo was still anxious to return to his native land, but he was aware that if the enamoured lady discovered his design, she would effect his utter destruction, or at least would counteract his plans. He was therefore uncertain how to act, and for this reason he had exhorted Coppo to secrecy as to the object of his arrival. Besides, he would have preferred, rather than basely desert her, to remain in the pleasing slavery to which his adored lady had consigned him. Fly, however, somewhere, they shortly must, as she had now become so extravagantly attached to him that he was fearful of the affair reaching the ears of Lagi Amet. With this view, he now determined to persuade her to accompany him, insisting that it was one of the duties of a Christian wife to share her husband's fortunes and follow him wherever he went. He therefore considered the arrival of Coppo as a very fortunate circumstance, and after consulting with him, and reflecting upon the best method that could be adopted, they determined to carry her along with them.

So Niccolo represented to his wife that there was no time to be lost, if they wished to avoid the fate of so many unfortunate lovers, who had fallen victims to the bowstring or the sack; and to this judicious opinion the lady, without any sort of hesitation, subscribed.

"Yes," she added, "I will see your beautiful Italy; there is no question of it at all: whatever sacrifices I make, whatever pleasures and honours I relinquish, they are for your sake, and I shall not regret them. And yet I tremble when I think upon the dreadful risks I am about to encounter, even if I escape alive out of the hands of the savage infidel who called me his consort, whom it would perhaps be the wisest way to strangle before we go."

Here Niccolo, grieved that she should have made so little progress in the duty of Christian charity, reminded her that she must no longer consider these things in the light she had been used to, adding that he felt inclined rather to pity the fate of Amet in being

deprived of so much beauty and perfection, were it not that it was his paramount duty to convert infidels to the true faith. Then, advising her to collect the whole of her treasures, but to respect the property of Amet, he hastened to fix the time and method of his departure with his friend Coppo.

All at length being in readiness, they planned a little pleasure party, feigning it was entirely for the amusement of Amet, to which the foolish infidel, not a little proud of so delicate a compliment, gladly consented. Having conveyed everything on board a fast-sailing little pinnace, they said that they would just pay a visit to one of the Dey's large ships before they called for their master ; and, hoisting all sail, they very wisely left the old merchant behind them.

They had proceeded about half a league from shore, when some of Lagi Amet's servants, observing them pass the vessel at full sail and boldly hold on their course, raised a hue-and-cry that very quickly reached the ears of their master. Tearing his hair, at least what little was left of it, the credulous old infidel, in a fit of rage and despair, despatched boats in pursuit without number, employing himself in the meantime with trying different bowstrings and other refined instruments of torture to welcome their return. And unluckily, as it happened, though they escaped pursuit and set foot in safety on the Sicilian shore, they took up their quarters at an hotel in Messina, where the following unpleasant circumstances occurred.

For the ambassador of the King of Tunis having that very day arrived at the same place to transact affairs of great importance at the court of Sicily, occupied apartments in the same house, and casting his eyes upon the disordered dress and dark complexion of the lady, he thought that he recognised in the fugitive one whom he had often seen at Tunis. At the same moment arrived letters advertising him of the lady's flight, and imposing upon him the duty of securing her person, with the leave of His Sicilian Majesty, with whom he was to use his utmost influence to have her sent back to her own husband. So immediately requesting an audience, the ambassador expounded his master's wishes on the subject ; and the King having verified the fact, expressed the greatest readiness to remand the fugitives, since it would afford pleasure to his ally, from whom at that time he was desirous of obtaining some essential favours.

What were the feelings, then, of the unhappy party, who, imagining that they had secured their escape, found they had rushed upon their own destruction, and were to be consigned into the hands of an offended and relentless enemy ! The heart of Coppo was torn with distraction for his friend, while the lovers uttered the most piteous cries and prayers, pleading also that they were united in faith and in

marriage, both deserving of freedom, and both Christians. All, however, was of no avail, for the King, anxious to conciliate the Dey, commanded them to be re-embarked forthwith in the same vessel under the care of one of his own captains, who had orders to land them in Barbary, and deposit them safely, with the King's compliments, in the hands of their lawful sovereign. And already were they proceeding upon their wretched voyage with calm and favourable breezes, from which they turned in anguish to the shores that were receding from their view, when Fortune, as if weary at length of her continued persecutions, again raised a furious tempest before the vessel had time to make the port, and drove her back until she reached the Tyrrhene Sea, near Leghorn, where, broken and dismantled, she became the easy prey of some Pisan corsairs.

But noble ransom being offered them by the unfortunate captives, they were shortly afterwards put on shore, and at length arrived in safety, with some portion of their remaining treasures, at the city of Pisa. There, owing to the infinite dangers and sufferings to which she had been subjected, the hapless lady was seized with a fever that had nearly proved mortal, and it was the incessant care and affection of Niccolo alone that succeeded in restoring her.

Upon her recovery, they bent their way towards Florence, where, on their arrival, they were received with the utmost surprise and the warmest congratulations by all their friends, while feasts and revelry on all sides testified the joy that was felt for their return. When the health of his beloved proselyte and benefactress was a little recruited, Niccolo kindly proposed, for their more complete satisfaction, that his beloved wife should be again baptised in the Church of San Giovanni ; and being christened by the name of Beatrice, she was once more solemnly espoused by him, with the utmost splendour and magnificence, according to the minutest rites and ceremonies of the Holy Church.

At the same time, in order to bind their interests in a still nearer union, Niccolo bestowed upon his friend Coppo the hand of his sister, who, in addition to the charms of beauty, boasted likewise all the virtues of her brother. Beatrice, delighted with everything she saw and heard, even beyond the picture held out to her by the happy Niccolo, soon made such rapid progress in every desirable virtue and accomplishment as to astonish the Florentine ladies by the richness and vivacity of her ideas, and the charms of her manners and conversation.

In a short time, also, she became so fondly attached to her new sister-in-law as to render it difficult to decide whether their friendship or that of their husbands was the most rare and exemplary. Certain it is that the two happy pairs passed their days in such entire amity and peace, that there never occurred the slightest cause

of dissatisfaction or division, an instance of domestic happiness highly deserving of commemoration, and which attracted universal admiration and applause. Indeed, so far from becoming disagreeable to or weary of each other, they appeared daily to take more pleasure in one another's company, and more intent upon amusing, gratifying, and instructing themselves and their friends around them, in such a manner that, becoming extremely popular with all parties, they exercised the most happy and beneficial influence over the manners and feelings of the people of Florence.

GENTILE SERMINI
15TH CENTURY

THE FORTUNES OF GALLIO AND CARDINA

IN the province of Cabar, in Asia, there once flourished two noble and magnificent cities, situated within ten leagues of each other, called Soriana and Belfiore.

Jealous of their respective power and influence, they merely observed an external show of amity, and, though engaged in commercial intercourse, they never cordially united together. The people of Soriana being the more powerful of the two, frequently threatened the independence of those of Belfiore, and attempted by every means in their power to weaken and humiliate them. Well aware of their danger, the latter, rather than submit an inch of their dominions to the sovereignty of the Soriani, were prepared to throw themselves into the arms of the Christians or the Jews, and even to renounce the faith of their ancestors.

Now, in the city of Belfiore there was a noble youth of the name of Gallio, who happened to be deeply enamoured of a young girl named Cardina, daughter of the great Marmoreo, who, strongly opposing the attachment of the young people, took measures to have the lover falsely accused and declared a rebel to the state. Immediately after his banishment, Gallio set out for the city of Soriana, and there learning that Marmoreo himself had been the author of his disgrace, stung with a feeling of resentment, he adopted the most subtle plans of revenge (inveighing bitterly against the father), all of which he as suddenly abandoned when he reflected upon the unaltered passion which he felt for the daughter.

At such times he would exclaim :

" Oh, wretched, wretched Gallio ! How dare I even imagine these means of revenge ?—revenge at the expense of my beloved Cardina ! To injure her father is to injure her—her whom I must ever worship and ever serve, though the daughter of my bitterest enemy ! Oh, distraction ! I am torn with contending duties ; I am injured, and I burn for revenge ; I love, and yet I am about to

offend the object of my idolatry. For, alas ! I must do it, or remain for ever dishonoured ! Hath he not driven me forth as a rebel and a traitor from my native place ? Yet thou, my love, my Cardina, wert not here to blame, for I fondly trust thou hast shed tears over my lot. When shall I behold thee—when return to Belfiore again ? Oh, ye gods ! that I could cease to think, cease to exist, under the cruel thoughts that rack me ! For revenge ought to call louder than my love, and yet I know I can do nothing to displease her. Fester thy base heart, Marmoreo, that could conceive the foul and vindictive purpose of rendering me the veriest wretch that loads earth's weary bosom, weary of such monsters as thee ! ”

Gallio having thus resolved to abandon all measures of vengeance, absence and hopelessness had soon the effect of weakening his love. In the course of a year or two the image of Cardina ceased to haunt his fancy, but feelings of revenge and hatred, on the other hand, seemed to have usurped its place. She no longer continued to stand, like a good genius, between him and her father ; and after revolving a thousand schemes of vengeance in his mind, he resolved, in order to deprive his enemy both of his authority and his life, to attempt the subjugation of his countrymen under the yoke of the Soriani.

With this view he made himself acquainted with a party whose secret object was to watch every opportunity of rendering themselves masters of Belfiore. The number appointed consisted of fifteen, and to these Gallio discovered his design of subjecting his native place, observing at the same time :

“ I require of you nothing further than the power of disposing as I please of the persons of Marmoreo and Cardina : the one for the sake of vengeance ; the other, I trust, to be treated in a kinder way.”

To this the confederates gave their ready consent, and the conspiracy was matured before the beginning of the ensuing year ; while a number of persons, amounting to sixty, of Sorian families which had long resided at Belfiore, united with them, in order better to betray the place.

Among these, Saladino, who had the command of the Porto Marina, was the most powerful, his family having enjoyed many lucrative offices of high trust in Belfiore during a period of nearly two hundred years. With him Gallio and his party arranged the manner in which they were to be admitted through the said gate ; and at the appointed hour the whole force of the Soriani was secretly marched by night into the province of Belfiore.

Gallio, having been intensely engaged during many days previous, allowing himself little time for sleep, devoted a few moments to repose before setting out on his final exploit, and tried to compose himself to rest. In this state of suspense the idea of Cardina

naturally occurred to his mind ; and the goddess of love attempting, from compassion, to counteract the influence of Mars and Saturn that so greatly predominated in him, presented her image in his slumbers, arrayed in more than her usual beauty, and with an expression of sorrow and tenderness in her countenance, while she seemed to say that her everlasting love and gratitude should be the reward of his forbearance, if he would consent to abandon his cruel and sanguinary designs.

So vivid was the impression upon his mind, that, opening his arms as if to embrace her, he awoke, and found he had clasped only his sword that lay at his side. With a feeling of rage and disappointment, he felt inclined to turn it against his own bosom, so strongly had his dream affected him, and altered his previous resolution of persevering in his enterprise. His love for Cardina also seemed to acquire renewed strength ; and recollecting every word and action of the vision, his desire of vengeance and all his bitter hatred against her father were forgotten as he burst into a passionate flood of tears. Then the hope of mutual passion which she appeared to hold out to him in his dreams, and the expression of her grief and trouble, all combined to turn the tide of his feelings into a more loyal and patriotic course.

Suddenly acting under the impulse of this change, he summoned his fellow-conspirators, exiles, like himself, from Belfiore, to a secret meeting, and proceeded to address them in the following words :

" Fellow-citizens and brothers ! Can it be true that we are about to destroy the place that gave us birth and to betray the city of our ancestors into the hands of her deadliest foes ? Let us pause ere we produce irreparable evils, that may call down on us the execration of posterity, by turning our arms against our native land, that ought to be directed against its enemies. Alas ! how shall we bear to see the Soriani lords of us and of our countrymen, ourselves the worst of vassals ! For let us not flatter ourselves that we shall reap other than the traitor's reward. Honour and treachery are yet in our power to choose. Fellow-citizens, which shall we embrace ? "

" Honour and our country ! " exclaimed all with one voice.

" Stay, hear me further," cried Gallio, taking advantage of the enthusiasm he had produced ; " a messenger is just arrived, bringing me such tidings that, if you have heart to join me, we will return to our own city, but not without the glory of having first vanquished its enemies ! "

Inspired with the fervour of his patriotism, the whole of his companions promised to follow him whithersoever he would lead.

" Then," cried Gallio, " let one of you attend me," and he selected the man he wished, " and let the rest await us here ! "

Having thus agreed upon the course they were to pursue, Gallio,

along with his companion, affected to proceed with the scheme as before, and, under the pretence of an interview with Saladino, the governor of the Porta Marina, in order to fix upon the signals that were to be given for entering into the city of Belfiore, they proceeded forwards on horseback, until they reached Castel Fioralto, of which the governor, Parione, was one of the principal citizens, and strongly exasperated against the people of Soriana on account of their having cruelly slain his father; and with him they took further counsel about their plans. On his inquiring into the cause of their arrival, Gallio replied :

" We are come to inform you that it is in our power either to destroy or make our city twice as powerful as it is, and as we are quite aware of your wishes, we shall reveal everything to you just as it occurred."

On hearing the particulars, Parione expressed his entire concurrence, and united in their plans with the utmost joy. Having matured these and sworn fidelity to each other, Parione, speedily mounting horse, took his leave, and arrived before sunset at Belfiore, where, presenting himself before Patrioni, master of the palace where the seignior held their sittings, he desired him to call a secret meeting of a hundred of the chief citizens of the place. This done, and the subject being proposed, it met with the general approbation of the whole assembly; and instantly closing all the gates and doubling the guards, they gave orders for the arrest of Saladino and the sixty conspirators, ready prepared for the undertaking.

Upon being subjected to the question and confronted with Gallio, they made confession and were placed in strict confinement. The whole city, in the meantime, was put under arms and prepared for the reception of the force of the Soriani led on by Gallio. About two hours before daylight, the tramp of horse was heard approaching; and Saladino was compelled to open the gate, as had been agreed upon, at the appointed signals, betraying his party to destruction, on condition that his own and his children's lives should be spared; the whole of his family, in case of his failure, being involved in one common ruin. When the time approached, therefore, though desirous of saving his own party, he opened the gates by command of Gallio, and the hostile force, led on by the chief citizens of Soriana, rushed forward into the city.

Many of the leaders were richly armed and caparisoned, vieing with each other in the splendour of their appearance, and shining with gold and precious gems, ornaments in which their country abounded. Add to these, the great variety of burnished shields, lances, bows, and quivers, with dark plumes nodding in the air, and the flash of arms glittering through the moonlight. Thus proudly decorated are the Soriani accustomed to march forth to meet their

enemies in the open field, the chief lords and gentlemen eagerly pressing forward in the van, leaving the least considerable of the citizens to bring up the rear. Marshalled, accordingly, in their best array, the Soriani now arrived at the Porta Marina, where, received by Saladino, they believed themselves upon the point of becoming masters of the city.

By the advice of Gallio, they immediately marched forward and took possession of the cloister of Diana's temple, to the number of six thousand men, while three thousand were held in reserve in the temple of Mercury. Before daybreak, however, just as they imagined they were on the point of striking a decisive blow, they were startled by the loud clash of arms above them, and looking up, beheld crowds of armed men lining the walls of the great cloister of Diana, the chiefs of whom addressed the astonished Soriani with the cry of, "Yield, traitors, yield; or death to our prisoners!" at the same time showering down loads of burning combustibles upon their heads, so as to convince them they had not the least chance of escape.

After some threats of rage and despair, the Soriani, finding every means of opposition useless, were induced to surrender, and threw down their arms. The whole of their rich equipage and all their golden ornaments became the spoil of their adversaries, while they were themselves led away in ranks of ten to be consigned to the gloomy dungeons of Sabar. Their great commander, Rabooth, who guarded the temple of Mercury with his three thousand soldiers, shortly afterwards met with the same fate, appealing only to the mercy of his victorious enemy.

By the intercession of Gallio, he was pardoned on the following conditions: that he should make oath never again to enter into the city of Soriana or attempt anything against his victorious enemy. After making a solemn engagement to this effect, he was allowed to go free, and directly took his departure from the city, establishing his residence, with his companions, at Sarbonia, one hundred leagues from Soriana.

The Belfioresi then returning in triumphal procession to the grand cloister of Diana, collected the spoils of their adversaries, and carried them afterwards to their palace-master, who appropriated them to the benefit of the community. They next proceeded to witness the execution of the treacherous friends of Saladino, who had entered into terms with Gallio to betray their country, and who now were led forth into the large square to the number of sixty-five, all of whom were quartered alive. Over the heads of the traitor and his sons, whose lives were spared, was written in large letters the result of the invasion in the following manner:

"We, the people of Belfiore, have revenged ourselves upon our

enemies by turning their arms against themselves ; let the traitor Saladino bear witness to this. We send him and his children to you, with his companions, all of whom may be known by the tickets appended to their necks ; the rest of the soldiers, for good reasons, we, the people of Belfiore, think proper to retain. Moreover we decree that in future no native of Soriana shall become resident in our city, or dare to assume the name of a Belfiorese, that he may no longer enjoy the advantage of betraying us, and of turning our hospitality into our ruin."

Along with this fatal proclamation were sent four cartloads filled with the dead bodies of their enemies, which reached about nightfall the gates of Soriana, whose inhabitants were expecting the arrival of their countrymen with a very different escort. Upon the return of the party to Belfiore, a grand tournament, with festivals of every kind, was proclaimed for the people, to be continued during a series of many weeks.

Gallio, who had now greatly distinguished himself in the eyes of the Belfioresi, ordered a great feast in honour of the victory, and proceeded with a numerous party to wait upon Patriono, grand-master of the palace, requesting an assemblage of the chief citizens, to which Marmoreo and his daughter Cardina should be invited. When met together, Gallio entered with a train of friends and nobles, and harangued them in the following words :

" My honoured fathers, senators, and chiefs of bands ! When I contemplate the singular degree of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and valour with which you have hitherto conducted your affairs, I bow to the decree that rendered me an unhappy exile from my native land. Nor am I here come to question the justice of the proceeding instituted against me by your learned and distinguished citizen, Marmoreo, though I still remain in ignorance of his motives. Rather would I accuse myself in having been so unfortunate as to draw down upon myself the weight of your displeasure ; for which I do here humbly entreat your forgiveness, more especially in consideration of my tender age, not presuming to make other defence or set up any better excuse. And so far am I sensible of your high wisdom and authority and of my own slight deserts, that I am here ready to deliver myself up to your judgment once more, as a traitor to my country, and the author of the hateful and sacrilegious plot just attempted by your enemies. True, it was I, and I alone, who brought the whole secret power of Soriana into the bosom of your homes, who induced Saladino, with his fellow traitors, on whom you had conferred your offices of trust and honour, to league with your foes in this nefarious design, and open to us your gates, that we might bring you under the yoke of Soriana, from which you are now fortunately for ever free. And let me caution you, before I yield

my forfeit life, never in future to commit offices of trust or the command of gates to the Soriani, or to any other foreigners upon the face of the earth. It is enough to grant them passports through your dominions ; but to make them governors over gates and citadels is the height of infatuation ; for the love of country never becomes entirely obliterated from the human breast.

" Now, as the unhappy cause of the great evil that had so nearly befallen the state, I surrender my person into your hands, entreating only, with my dying prayers, that the glory and triumph of our last noble enterprise may be wholly attributed to the youthful and beauteous Cardina, whose many virtues have produced, by their influence over my soul, the present happy result. It was she who snatched the patricidal sword out of my hand, who, when I was bent on the irretrievable destruction of her father and her friends, stood between us, like a guardian angel of peace, and with her tender and sorrowful aspect, her passionate tears, and sweet appeals to my love and honour, restored me to higher and better thoughts, pointing out to me the path of patriotic duty that I have since pursued. If, then, death be due to me as a traitor, to her let triumphal arches and honours befitting a queen be afforded ; let her praises be sung over my obsequies ; let her be called the saviour of Belfiore, and soothe my wounded spirit ere it take its final flight ! "

Here Gallio became silent, and kneeling in the midst of the council, he raised his hands, as if in prayer, while his eyes were bent upon the ground, and awaited in this attitude his sentence. The chiefs and elders of the city, imagining that Gallio would have closed his harangue by soliciting honours and rewards for his great services, having risen by his last exploit high in the estimation of all ranks, were surprised at such proofs of unfeigned humility and contrition, and began to consider him in a still nobler point of view than before. Mingled tears, congratulations, and applause followed the conclusion of his address. But the emotions of Cardina and her father, the author of all Gallio's sufferings, far surpassed those of any others present : the lady's tears flowed dispassionately and uncontrolled ; her sobs drowned her voice when she attempted to intercede for him ; while the more silent but deep and painful struggles of her father, torn as he was by the sense of ingratitude and remorse, produced a sensation of awe and trouble throughout the assembly.

It was evident that the lovers had long been attached to each other ; that he must have opposed their union by the most cruel and unjustifiable measures, and a feeling of compassion for both soon communicated itself to the people, who, rushing forward with wild and tumultuous cries, demanded the head of Marmoreo, and declared Gallio their liege lord and prince. The chiefs and elders, yielding to the popular commotion, rose from their seats, and

deputing one of their members to bear the ensigns of authority, they placed the gold staff in the hands of their new master.

After a due degree of modest refusal and deference to the superior claims of the aged senators, Gallio was induced to accept the government of the state, and mounting the sovereign tribunal, in an harangue to the people expressed his gratitude for the high trust reposed in him. The people then becoming acquainted with his attachment to the Lady Cardina, unanimously insisted upon her taking her place as his bride-elect at his side, the sole condition upon which they consented to spare the life of the treacherous and cruel Marmoreo.

The nuptials were accordingly soon after solemnised in the most splendid manner, followed by every variety of games and jousts, and such exhibitions as were best adapted to gratify the taste of the people. Wherever Gallio made his appearance he was welcomed with the most enthusiastic shouts of applause as the beloved sovereign of his people ; and he long continued lord of Belfiore, blest in the affections of the wise and beautiful Cardina, and esteemed for his equal administration of the laws.

The season of these joyous festivals being over, it was resolved in council that the dungeons of Sabar should be blocked up on all sides, with the six thousand Sorian soldiers enclosed within, all of whom thus miserably perished. A herald was next despatched to summon the city of Soriana, which was soon compelled to send in its submission to Gallio, and was annexed to his dominions.

ANTON-FRANCESCO GRAZZINI 1503-1585

WHY GABRIELLO RE-MARRIED HIS WIFE

SOON after Maestro Basilio, a wealthy doctor of Milan, came to live in Pisa, he had the pleasure of having it frequently hinted to him by several respectable Pisanese that the honour of his alliance would by no means be unacceptable to them, and many were the young beauties who passed in review before him.

At length he fixed his eyes upon a young lady, both of whose parents were deceased, and who, though not rich, was of a good family. She brought the doctor little more as her wedding portion than the house she lived in, though she afterwards presented him with a large family ; and for many years, increasing in wealth, they lived extremely happily together. By this lady he had three sons and a daughter, the latter of whom, as well as one of her brothers, their parents very happily bestowed in marriage when they became old enough to settle in the world. The youngest boy had a decided taste for letters, while the second, who gave his parents great anxiety, was of an extremely dull and obstinate disposition, with a great aversion to learning and every species of improvement ; morose, abstracted, and unamiable, when his negative was once pronounced, it was as unalterable as his own nature. The doctor at last finding that he could mould him into nothing, to get rid of him, sent him into the country, where he had purchased at least half a dozen different estates, and whither he was fond of retiring to escape the continued noise and turbulence of the city.

But about ten years after he had despatched his son Lazzaro—for this was the fool's name—into this retreat, there arose a dreadful malady in Pisa, which carried off numbers of people in a violent fever, which subsiding into a deep lethargy, they awakened no more, and it was, moreover, as infectious as the plague. The doctor, desirous of showing his skill, and taking the lead of the other physicians on this occasion, exposed himself so fearlessly for his fees, that he took the infection, which soon set at defiance every applica-

tion of his most esteemed syrups and recipes, and in a few hours he retired from the profession for ever. Nor was this all, for he communicated the disease to his family, and one after another they all died, until there was only an old nurse left alive in the house.

It was indeed a dreadful visitation upon all Pisa, and the mortality would have been still greater had not the survivors fled in haste from the city. With the change of season, however, its severity seemed to mitigate, the persons attacked gradually recovered, the inhabitants returned to their houses, and the people resumed their usual occupations.

It was now that Lazzaro succeeded to all the property left by his deceased relations, though he merely added a single domestic to the reduced establishment of his father, consisting only of the old servant. His farms and the receipt of his rents were left in the care of an agent, as he bestowed no attention upon business.

Many families, notwithstanding, appeared anxious for the honour of his alliance, without making the slightest objection to his rusticity and folly ; but the only answer that he uniformly returned to these proposals was, that he had made up his mind to wait for at least four years, and that he afterwards might perhaps be induced to think of it. As he was known never to have changed his mind, no one importuned him further upon the subject. Though he was fond of amusements in his own way, he admitted no one to his confidence, and started on beholding a card of invitation like a guilty spirit at the sign of the cross.

Opposite to his house there resided a man of the name of Gabriello, with his wife and two children, a boy about five years old and a little girl, whom he supported as well as he was able by his skill in bird-catching and fishing. Though his abode was humble, his nets and cages were of the very best construction, and he managed them so judiciously, that, with the assistance of his wife, Santa, who had the reputation of an excellent sempstress, he made a very pretty livelihood.

It happened that Gabriello was an exact counterpart in voice, countenance, and appearance of our foolish friend Lazzaro ; their very complexion and their beards were of the same cut and quality. If they were not twin brothers, they ought to have been so, for they were not only of the same age and stature, but in their taste and manners they greatly resembled each other. It would have been impossible even for the fisherman's wife to have recognised Lazzaro disguised in the dress of her husband ; the only distinction that could be made was that one was dressed as a labourer and the other like a gentleman.

Pleased with the happy resemblance which he could not but acknowledge between himself and the fisherman, and fancying it

laid him under a sort of obligation for which he felt grateful, he began to solicit his acquaintance. This he did in the pleasantest manner possible, frequently sending him good things from his table and a bottle of old wine. The fisherman's gratitude was so pleasing that he soon also sent for him to dine and sup with him, passing the evenings in the most agreeable conversations imaginable; the adventures of the good fisherman, and the prodigious lies he told, being a never-failing source of admiration and delight to Lazzaro. For the fisherman's skill extended far beyond his art, and the rogue contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of his patron, until the latter was hardly ever easy out of his company.

Thus having one day treated his rustic friend to a noble feast, they began to talk, over their wine, of the various modes of fishing, all of which were explained greatly to the satisfaction of the host. None, however, seemed to take his fancy so much as the description of the diving net, on which the fisherman dwelt with uncommon enthusiasm, as the most useful and delightful invention in the world. It inspired Lazzaro with the ambition of immediately witnessing a specimen of this part of the piscatory art, in which great fish may be caught, not with nets and lines merely, but with the very mouth, a drag-net hanging round the neck of the diving fisherman!

"Oh, let us go now! let us go now!" exclaimed the happy Lazzaro, while the guest, as usual, expressed himself ready to attend his patron.

As it happened to be the middle of summer, nothing could be better; and finishing their dessert, Gabriello took his drag-nets and they went out together. They bent their way through the Porta à Mare directly towards the Arno, along the fence of pales, above the great bank crowned with alder-trees, spreading a most delicious shade. There the fisherman begged his patron to sit down and refresh himself while he observed the manner in which he should proceed.

Having first stripped himself, he bound the nets round his arms and neck, and then, boldly plunging into the river, down he went. But being a complete adept at his business, he rose again very shortly to the surface, bringing up with him at one drag eight or ten great fish, all of the best kind. This was a real miracle in the eyes of Lazzaro, who could not divine how he could possibly see to catch them under water, and he resolved to ascertain the manner in which it was done. With this view, it being a hot July day, and thinking that a cold bath might refresh him, he prepared, with Gabriello's assistance, to step in. He was conducted by him to a shallow part, and when about up to his knees, Gabriello left him to his own discretion, only warning him that though the bottom shelved down very gradually, he had better go no farther than where a

certain post rose above the rest ; and pointing it out to him once more, he pursued his business.

Lazzaro felt singular pleasure in being thus left to himself, and splashing about, performed all sorts of antics in the water. His eyes were often fixed in admiration upon his friend Gabriello, who every now and then rose from the bottom with a fish in his mouth, the better to please his patron, who at this sight could no longer restrain his applause.

"It is very plain now," he cried, "that it must be light under water, or he could never have seen how to catch that fish in his mouth, besides all the others in his net. I wish I knew how."

So saying, the next time that he saw Gabriello dive, he imitated the motion by ducking his head, and at the same time losing his footing, slipped gently down, till he not only reached the post, but passed it with his head still under water. When he fairly got out of his depth, still trying whether he could see, it appeared a strange thing to him ; for he found he could no longer get his breath, and he endeavoured in vain to fight his way up again, the water pouring in at his mouth and ears, at his nose and eyes, in such a way that he could see nothing.

In short, the current at length catching him, bore him away in perfect amazement, and he was too far gone to cry out for help. Gabriello was in the meantime employed in diving down into a large hole he had discovered near the stakes, full of fish, which he was handing into his net with the greatest alacrity, while his poor friend and patron was already more than half dead, having now come up and gone down again for the third time, and at the fourth he rose no more.

Just at this moment, Gabriello, with a prodigious draught, again appeared, and turning round with a joyous face to look at Lazzaro, what was his surprise and terror when he found his master was gone ! Gazing round with the hope of perceiving him somewhere, he only found his clothes, just as he had left them. In the utmost alarm he ran again to the water, and in a short time discovered his body thrown by the current on the opposite bank.

He swam to the place, and on perceiving that his good patron was quite cold and lifeless, he stood for some moments like a statue, overpowered with grief and terror, without knowing how to act. In the first place he was afraid, if he published the tidings of his death, of being accused of having drowned him to plunder him of his money, an idea which threw him into such alarm, that, covering his face with his hands, he stood buried in profound grief and reflection.

At length he suddenly uttered an exclamation of joy, as the thought rushed into his mind, "I am safe ! I am safe ! There are no witnesses of the accident, and I know what I will do : it is the hour when,

luckily, everybody is asleep."

With these words he thrust the nets and the fish into his great basket, and taking the dead body of Lazzaro on his shoulders, heavy as it was, he placed it among some wet reeds hard by the shore. He then bound the nets round his poor friend's arms, and again bearing him to water, he contrived to fasten the strings in such a way round one of the deepest stakes, that they could with difficulty be withdrawn, giving the body the appearance of having been thus entangled while fishing.

He then assumed his patron's attire, and got even into his very shoes, and sat down quietly on the bank, resolved to try what fortune would do for him. His strong resemblance to his deceased friend, if successful, would now not only save his life, but make it ever after, as he believed, most happy and comfortable. As the hour seemed now arrived, with equal skill and courage, he entered upon the dangerous experiment, and began to call out lustily for help in the person of poor Lazzaro: "Help! help, good people, or the poor fisherman will be drowned! Oh, he comes up no more!" and with this he roared out tremendously.

The miller was the first man who reached the spot, but numbers of people were gathering on all sides to learn what could possibly cause such an insufferable noise. Gabriello continued to bellow even for some time after they arrived, the better to counterfeit his patron, weeping the whole time as he told his tale—how the poor fisherman had dipped, and brought up fish so often; but the last time he had stopped nearly an hour under water, and having waited for him in vain, he began to be afraid he was coming up no more.

The people inquiring, with a smile at his simplicity, whereabouts it was, he pointed out the spot, on which the miller, who was a great friend of Gabriello's, began to strip, and plunged into the river. And there, sure enough, as he believed, he found his friend Gabriello caught in his own net, and entangled fast by his neck and heels to the unlucky stake.

"Heaven have mercy on us!" cried the miller; "here he is, poor Gabriello, poor Gabriello! quite drowned in his own entangled net"; using his utmost efforts at the same time to loosen it from about the stake.

Such were the lamentations of Gabriello's friends on hearing this that he could scarcely refrain from betraying himself. Two more threw themselves into the water to assist the miller, and at length, with some difficulty, they fished the body out. The arms and legs were all entangled in the net, and his relations in their indignation tore the unlucky cords to tatters.

The tidings of his death being spread abroad, a priest immediately attended, and the body was borne upon a bier to the nearest church,

where it was laid out in order to be recognised by Gabriello's friends. His disconsolate widow, accompanied by other relations bewailing him and her children, now hastened to the spot. Believing the body to be his, a scene of tender affliction ensued. After beating her breast and tearing her hair, she sat down and wept with her little children, while every one around, and above all the real Gabriello, could not restrain their tears.

So overpowered indeed was he by his feelings, that pulling his poor patron's hat over his brows and hiding his face in his pocket-handkerchief, he addressed his wife before all the people in a hoarse and piteous voice :

" Come, good woman, do not despair, do not cry so. I will provide for you, and take care both of you and your children ; the poor man lost his life in trying to amuse me, and I shall not forget it. He was a clever fisherman ; but leave off crying—I tell you I will provide for you. So go home, and go in peace, for you shall want for nothing while I live, and when I die I will leave you what is handsome " ; and this he ended with a kind of growl, intended to express his concern both for her and the deceased fisherman.

For these words he was highly applauded by all the people present, while the imaginary widow, somewhat consoled by his promises, was conveyed back by her relations to her own dwelling. But Gabriello in his new character immediately marched and took possession of Lazzaro's house, walking in exactly as he had often observed his poor friend was wont to do, without noticing any one. He went into a richly furnished chamber overlooking some beautiful gardens, and taking the keys out of his deceased patron's pockets, he began to search the trunks and boxes, where he found other lesser keys, which admitted him to all the treasures and valuables in the place. It was a storehouse of wealth indeed, for it not only contained the fortunes of the deceased doctor and other relations of Lazzaro, to the amount of several thousand florins of gold, but was equally rich in jewels and plate.

At the sight of these Gabriello repressed with difficulty loud exclamations of rapture and surprise, and he sat down to devise fresh means of supporting his title to Lazzaro's estates. With this view, being perfectly acquainted with his late friend's character, he went down about supper-time uttering the most strange and wild exclamations of grief. The two servants of the house, who had heard of the fatal accident and the cause of it, ran hastily to his relief. But instead of listening to their consolation, he directly ordered six loaves and a portion of the supper, with two flasks of wine, to be carried to the disconsolate widow across the way.

On the return of the domestic with the poor widow's grateful thanks, Gabriello partook of a light supper set out in the handsomest

style, and, without saying a word to any one, shut himself up in his chamber and went to bed. There he remained until the hour of nine the next morning, in order the better to indulge his reflections and his grief. Though the difference between his voice and language and those of their former master was perceptible to his domestics, they attributed it entirely to his violent sorrow for his deceased friend. And the poor widow, finding how well he seemed inclined to keep his word of supporting her and her children, very soon dismissed the condolences of her relations and retired as usual quietly to rest.

The next day Gabriello began to rise at his old friend's usual hour, and though he had now a variety of cares upon his hands, he never permitted the poor widow, Santa, to want for anything. He imitated his late patron's way of life very exactly, for he really seemed to have also succeeded to his indolence, which he adopted without an effort. He was still, however, extremely concerned to hear that his wife's grief for his death continued unabated, though he certainly felt flattered by it, and began to think in what way he could console her, and how he could contrive means to marry her again. Feeling not a little puzzled upon the subject, he resolved to go to her house, where he found her, accompanied by one of her cousins, it not being long since the period of his supposed death.

Having informed her that he wished to speak to her upon an affair of some importance, her kind relation immediately took his leave, aware of the numerous obligations which her rich neighbour had so charitably conferred upon her. When he had left them, Gabriello closed the door with the same air of familiarity and confidence as formerly, at which the poor woman could not help testifying some surprise, fearful lest he might presume too far upon the services he had rendered her. When Gabriello advanced, taking her little boy by the hand, she drew back timidly, at which action he could not help expressing his admiration of his wife's propriety in an audible voice and with a grin of delight.

Then, taking her by the hand, he spoke to her in his accustomed manner, and she gazed for a moment doubtfully in his face, while Gabriello, taking his little boy in his arms, tenderly caressed him, saying, "What, boy, is your mother weeping at our good fortune?" and shaking some money in his hand with a triumphant air, he gave it to him, and went on playing with him as usual.

But perceiving that his wife was overpowered with a variety of emotions which she could not control, unable longer to disguise the truth, he first fastened the door, and, fearful lest any one might overhear the strange story he had to reveal, he drew her into an inner chamber, and there related the whole affair just as it had passed. It is impossible to convey an idea of her surprise and joy as she hung

weeping upon his neck. But they were delicious tears, and her husband kissed them away with far greater rapture than he had ever before felt, and they sank overpowered with emotion into each other's arms.

It was necessary, however, to use the utmost precaution in retaining the fortune they had so strangely won; and after explaining the plans he had in view, and engaging his wife's promise to keep the matter secret, Gabriello returned to his new house. His wife, still affecting to retain her grief for his loss, frequently took care, before all her neighbours, to recommend her poor children to the gentleman's notice, who uniformly treated them with kindness.

The ensuing night he lay broad awake devising how he might best put his future plans into execution. Having at length resolved, he rose early, and bent his way to the Church of Santa Catterina, where he knew a venerable and devout monk, almost worshipped by the good people of Pisa, whose name was Fra Anselmo. He here announced a very strange and important piece of business, respecting which he wished to consult the conscience of the learned friar. The good father carried him into his cell, where Gabriello introduced himself as Lazzaro di Maestro Basilio da Milano, relating at the same time his whole family genealogy, and how he had remained sole heir of the whole property owing to the late plague.

He at last came to the story of poor Gabriello, the fisherman, laying the sole blame of the accident upon himself in persuading the wretched man to accompany him in a fishing excursion along the Arno. He then proceeded to relate the deplorable circumstances in which he had left his family, and taking into serious consideration the cause of the calamity, he felt it weigh so heavily upon his conscience, that he was resolved at all risks to make every reparation in his power.

But what reparation could be made to a woman, who, however lowly her condition, had fondly loved her husband, except by consoling her for her loss by directing her affections towards another object.

"And the truth is," he continued, "I am willing to marry her, and become a father to her children, and then," he continued with the greatest simplicity, "perhaps God will forgive me for the great sin I committed in taking him out a-fishing with me."

Though the pious father here smiled, it appeared so conscientious a proposal that he did not venture to oppose it, saying that he would not fail in this way to obtain the mercy of Heaven upon many of his past sins. Hearing this comfortable doctrine, Gabriello opened his purse-strings and presented the friar with thirty pieces, observing that he wished the mass of San Gregorio to be sung for three Mondays together, to ensure peace to the soul of the deceased

fisherman. The venerable monk's eyes brightened at the sight, and he promised mass should be sung the very next Monday. With respect to the projected alliance, he observed to Gabriello, that he rather praised him for his disregard to wealth and nobility in the proposed union.

"Make no account of it," he continued ; " you will be rich enough in the grace of Heaven : we all belong to the same father and the same mother, and virtue is the only true nobility. I know both her and her parents ; you could not do better, for she is born of a good family. So, go home, my good signor, and I will attend you when you please."

" Well, to-day, to-day, then ! " cried Gabriello, as he prepared to depart.

" Ah ! leave it to me," returned the friar, " and take my blessing with you, my son, and bring the ring in the meantime."

Gabriello hastened home, and purchased the ring accordingly, persuading himself there could be no harm in making sure that everything was quite correct in the difficult circumstances under which he laboured. So, with the consent of all the lady's friends and relations, the marriage was celebrated a second time. Gabriello, in the person of Lazzaro, then conducted his wife to her new house, where a splendid feast was prepared, and all their friends met to receive them.

Soon after, Gabriello gradually assuming the manners of a gentleman, dismissed the old maid- and man-servant with liberal gratuities and set up a handsome equipage and noble establishment. He astonished all Lazzaro's friends with the striking improvement that had taken place in the simpleton's manners, while his wife, Santa, became exceedingly genteel in all her actions.

The twice-married pair spent together a tranquil and happy life, and had two sons subsequently born, who, assuming a new family surname, called themselves De' Fortunati, and from these children sprang a race of men renowned both in letters and in arms.

GIOVAMBATTISTA GIRALDI
CINTHIO, 1504-1573

THE STORY OF DESDEMONA

THERE was once in Venice a Moor of great merit, who for his personal courage and the proofs he had given of his conduct, as well as his vigorous genius in the affairs of war, was held in great esteem by those gentlemen who, in rewarding patriotic services, excel all the republics that ever existed.

It happened that a virtuous woman of great beauty, called Desdemona, not drawn by female appetite, but by the virtue of the Moor, fell in love with him ; and he, subdued by the charms and noble sentiments of the lady, became equally enamoured of her. Their passion was so successful that they were married, although her relations did all in their power to make her take another husband. They lived together in such peace and concord while they were at Venice, that there never passed between them either word or action that was not expressive of affection.

The Venetians resolving to change the garrison which they maintain in Cyprus, elected the Moor to the command of the troops which they destined for that island. Although he was extremely pleased with the honour proposed to him (as it is a dignity conferred only on those who are noble, brave, trusty, and of approved courage), yet was his joy diminished when he reflected on the length and inconvenience of the voyage, supposing that Desdemona must be very averse to undertaking it.

His wife, who valued nothing in the world but her husband, and rejoiced exceedingly in the testimony of approbation so lately shown him by a powerful and celebrated republic, was extremely impatient for the departure of the troops, that she might accompany him to a post of so much honour. But she was very much vexed at seeing the Moor disturbed, and, not knowing the reason, said to him one day at dinner :

" How can you be so melancholy after having received from the Senate so high and so honourable a distinction ? "

" My love for you, Desdemona," replied the Moor, " disturbs my enjoyment of the rank conferred upon me, since I am now exposed

to this alternative—I must either endanger your life by sea or leave you at Venice. The first would be terrible, as I shall suffer extremely from every fatigue you undergo, from every danger that threatens you : the second would render me insupportable to myself, as parting from you would be parting from my life.”

“ Ah, husband,” returned Desdemona, “ why do you perplex yourself with such idle imaginations ? I will follow you wherever you go, though it were necessary to pass through fire instead of only going by water in a safe and well-equipped vessel. If there are dangers in the way I will share them with you ; and, indeed, your affection for me could not be great if you thought of leaving me at Venice to save me from a sea voyage, or believed that I would rather remain here in security than share with your both danger and fatigue. I insist, therefore, on your preparing for the voyage with all that cheerfulness which your dignity ought to inspire.”

The Moor then tenderly embraced his wife, saying, “ May Heaven long preserve us in this degree of reciprocal affection.”

Soon afterwards, having settled his affairs and prepared the necessary stores, he went on board the galley with his wife and his company, and sailed for Cyprus with a favourable wind.

He had in his company an ensign of a very amiable outward appearance, but whose character was extremely treacherous and base. He had imposed on the Moor's simplicity so successfully that he gained his friendship ; for although he was in fact a very great coward, yet his carriage and conversation were so haughty and full of pretension that you would have taken him for a Hector or an Achilles.

This rascal had also conducted his wife with him to Cyprus, who was a handsome and discreet woman ; and, being an Italian, Desdemona was so fond of her that they passed the greatest part of their time together. In the same company was also a lieutenant to whom the Moor was much attached. The lieutenant went often to the Moor's house, and dined frequently with him and his wife. Desdemona, seeing that the Moor was so fond of him, showed him every mark of attention and civility, with which the Moor was much pleased.

The detestable ensign, forgetting his duty to his own wife, and violating all the laws of friendship, honour, and gratitude with which he was bound to the Moor, fell passionately in love with Desdemona, and thought only how he might enjoy her. He dare not, however, avow himself, for fear the Moor, if he discovered it, should instantly put him to death. He sought by all the private means in his power to make Desdemona conscious of his love. But she was so entirely taken up with the Moor that she thought neither of him nor of any one else ; and all that he did to engage her affections produced not

the least effect. He then took it into his head that this neglect arose from her being pre-engaged in favour of the lieutenant ; and not only determined to get rid of him, but changed his affection for her into the most bitter hatred.

He studied, besides, how he might prevent in future the Moor from living happily with Desdemona, should his passion not be gratified after he had murdered the lieutenant. Revolving in his mind a variety of methods, all impious and abominable, he at last determined to accuse her to the Moor of adultery with the lieutenant. But knowing the Moor's great affection for Desdemona, and his friendship for the lieutenant, he plainly saw that unless his deceit was very artfully conducted, it would be impossible to make him think ill of either of them. For this reason he determined to wait till time and place afforded him a fit opportunity for entering on his wicked design ; and it was not long before the Moor degraded the lieutenant for having drawn his sword and wounded a soldier upon guard.

This accident was so painful to Desdemona, that she often tried to obtain for him her husband's pardon. In the meantime the Moor had observed to the ensign that his wife teased him so much in favour of the lieutenant that he feared he should be obliged at last to restore him to his commission. This appeared to that villain the proper moment for opening his scheme of treachery, which he began by saying :

" Perhaps Desdemona is fond of his company."

" And why ? " said the Moor.

" Nay," replied he, " I do not choose to meddle between man and wife ; but if you watch her properly, you will understand me."

Nor would he, to the earnest entreaties of the Moor, afford any further explanation. These words had stung the Moor so severely that he endeavoured perpetually to find out their meaning, and became exceedingly melancholy. Whereupon, when his wife some time afterwards repeated her solicitations that he would forgive the lieutenant, and not sacrifice the service and friendship of so many years to one slight fault, particularly as the lieutenant and the soldier were friends again. The Moor grew angry, and said to her :

" It is somewhat extraordinary, Desdemona, that you should take so much trouble about this fellow ; he is neither your brother nor your relation, that he should claim so much of your affection."

His wife, with much sweetness and humility, replied :

" I have no other motive for speaking than the pain it gives me to see you deprived of so excellent a friend as you have always told me

the lieutenant was to you. I hope you will not be angry with me ; yet his fault does not merit so much of your hatred : but you Moors are of so warm a constitution that every trifle transports you with anger and revenge."

The Moor, still more irritated by these words, replied :

" Perhaps one who suspects it not may learn that by experience ; I will be revenged for the injuries done to me, so thoroughly that I shall be satisfied."

His wife was much terrified by these expressions, and seeing him, for the first time, in a passion with her, submissively answered :

" I have none but the purest motives for speaking on the business : but, not to displease you in future, I promise never to speak of it again."

The Moor, on this new application made by his wife in favour of the lieutenant, imagined that the ensign's words meant that she was in love with him. He therefore went to that scoundrel in a state of great dejection, and endeavoured to make him speak more intelligibly. The ensign, bent on the ruin of this poor woman, after feigning an unwillingness to say anything to her disadvantage, and at last pretending to yield to the vehement entreaties of the Moor, said :

" I cannot conceal the pain I feel in being under the necessity of making a discovery which will be to you so very shocking ; but since you insist on it, and the attention which I ought to pay to the honour of my commanding officer prompts me to speak, I will not now refuse to satisfy your demand and my own duty. You must know, then, that Desdemona is only displeased at seeing you angry with the lieutenant, because, when he comes to your house, she consoles herself with him for the disgust which your blackness now occasions her to feel."

These words penetrated to the very bottom of the Moor's heart ; but to be better informed (although his previous suspicion made him give great credit to the ensign's information) he assumed a threatening countenance, and said :

" I know not what prevents me from cutting out that insolent tongue of yours that has so impudently attacked the honour of my wife."

The ensign then replied :

" I expected no other reward for this friendly office of mine ; but since my duty has made me go so far, and my regard for your honour still remains, I tell you again that the case is so ; and if her feigned affection for you has blindfolded you to such a degree that you have not seen what is so very visible, that does not at all lessen the truth of my assertion. The lieutenant himself, who is one of those who are

not content with their own enjoyments when some other is not made acquainted with them, told me so ; and," added he, " if I had not feared your displeasure, I would have given him at the time that death he merited. But since the information I give you, which concerns you more than any one else, makes you treat me so very improperly, I am sorry I did not hold my tongue, that I might have avoided giving you offence."

The Moor then answered, in great agitation :

" If you do not make me to see with my own eyes the truth of what you tell me, be assured that I will make you wish you had been born dumb."

" This would have been easy enough," replied the villain, " when he came to your house : but now that you have driven him away for a much lighter reason than that which ought to have banished him thence, it will be difficult to prove it. For though I think yet that he continues to enjoy Desdemona whenever you give him an opportunity, he must necessarily proceed with greater caution now than he did before he had incurred your displeasure. But I do not despair of making you see that which upon my word you will not believe."

They then separated. The poor Moor went home with a barbed arrow in his side, waiting impatiently for the day when the ensign should show him what was to render him for ever miserable. But the known purity of Desdemona's conduct gave no less uneasiness to the villainous ensign, because he was afraid he should not be able to convince the Moor of what he had so falsely assured him. He applied himself therefore to the invention of new malice, and devised other expedients.

I have already said that Desdemona went frequently to the ensign's house, and passed great part of the day with his wife. The villain had observed that she often brought with her a handkerchief that the Moor had given her, and which, as it was very delicately worked in the Moorish taste, was very highly valued by them both ; he determined to steal it, and by its means complete her ruin. He had a little girl of three years old that was much caressed by Desdemona ; and one day, when that unhappy woman was on a visit to this villain, he took up the child in his arms and presented it to Desdemona, who received it and pressed it to her bosom. In the same instant this deceiver stole from her sash the handkerchief with such dexterity that she did not perceive him, and went away with it in very high spirits.

Desdemona turned home, and, taken up with other thoughts, never recollected her handkerchief till some days after ; when, not being able to find it, she began to fear that the Moor should ask her for it, as he often did. The infamous ensign, watching his opportunity, went to

the lieutenant, and, to aid his wicked purpose, left the handkerchief on his bolster. The lieutenant did not find it till the next morning, when, getting up, he set his foot upon it as it had fallen to the floor. Not being able to imagine how it came there, and knowing it to be Desdemona's, he determined to carry it back to her ; and, waiting till the Moor was gone out, he went to the back-door and knocked.

Fortune, who seemed to have conspired along with the ensign the death of this poor woman, brought the Moor home in the same instant. Hearing some one knock he went to the window, and, much disturbed, asked :

" Who is there ? "

The lieutenant hearing his voice, and fearing that when he came down he should do him some mischief, ran away without answering. The Moor came down, and finding no one either at the door or in the street, returned full of suspicion to his wife, and asked if she knew who it was that had knocked. She answered with great truth that she knew not.

" But I think," said he, " it was the lieutenant."

" It might be he," said she, " or any one else."

The Moor checked himself at the time, though he was violently enraged, and determined to take no step without first consulting the ensign. To him he immediately went, and related what had just happened, begging him to learn from the lieutenant what he could on the subject. The ensign rejoiced much in this accident, and promised to do so.

He contrived to enter into discourse with him one day in a place where the Moor might see them. He talked with him on a very different subject, laughed much, and expressed by his motions and attitudes very great surprise. The Moor, as soon as he saw them separate, went to the ensign, and desired to know what had passed between them. The ensign, after many solicitations, at last told him that he had concealed nothing from him.

" He says he has enjoyed your wife every time that you have stayed long enough from home to give him an opportunity ; and that in their last interview she had made him a present of that handkerchief which you gave her."

The Moor thanked him, and thought that if his wife had no longer the handkerchief in her possession it would be a proof that the ensign had told him the truth. For which reason one day after dinner, among other subjects, he asked her for this handkerchief. The poor woman, who had long apprehended this, blushed exceedingly at the question, and, to hide her change of colour, which the Moor had very accurately observed, ran to her wardrobe and pretended to look for it. After having searched for some time :

"I cannot conceive," said she, "what is become of it! Have not you taken it?"

"Had I taken it," replied he, "I should not have asked you for it. But you may look for it another time more at your ease."

Leaving her then, he began to reflect what would be the best way of putting to death his wife and the lieutenant, and how he might avoid being prosecuted for the murder. Thinking night and day on this subject, he could not prevent Desdemona from perceiving that his behaviour to her was very different from what it had been formerly. She often asked him what it was that agitated him so violently.

"You, who were once the merriest man alive, are now the most melancholy."

The Moor answered and alleged a variety of reasons, but she was not satisfied with any of them; and knowing that she had done nothing to justify so much agitation, she began to fear that he grew tired of her. She once in conversation with the ensign's wife expressed herself thus:

"I know not what to say of the Moor; he used to treat me most affectionately; and I began to fear that my example will teach young women never to marry against their parents' consent, and the Italians in particular, not to connect themselves with men from whom they are separated by nature, climate, education, and complexion. But as I know him to be the confidential of your husband, whom he consults on all occasions, I entreat you, if you have heard anything that might explain this mystery and be of use to me, not to deny me your assistance." These words were accompanied with a flood of tears.

The ensign's wife, who knew all (as her husband had in vain endeavoured to prevail upon her to become an accomplice in the murder of Desdemona), but durst tell her nothing for fear of her husband, only said:

"Take care not to give the Moor any cause for suspicion, and do all in your power to convince him of your affection and fidelity."

"Why, so I do," said she, "but to no purpose."

The Moor, in the meantime, did all in his power to prove what he desired not to find true, and begged the ensign to make him see the handkerchief in possession of the lieutenant. Although this was a difficult undertaking, yet the villain promised to do all in his power to give him a satisfactory proof of this.

The lieutenant had a woman in the house, who was a notable embroiderer in muslin, and who, struck with the beauty of Desdemona's handkerchief, determined to copy it before it should be returned to her. She set about making one like it, and while she was

at work the ensign discovered that she sat at a window where any one who passed in the street might see her. This he took care to point out to the Moor, who was then fully persuaded that this chaste and innocent wife was an adulteress. He agreed with the ensign to kill both her and the lieutenant ; and, consulting together about the means, the Moor entreated him to undertake the assassination of the officer, promising never to forget so great an obligation. He refused, however, to attempt what was so very difficult and dangerous, as the lieutenant was equally brave and vigilant ; but with much entreaty and considerable presents he was prevailed on to say that he would hazard the experiment.

One dark night, after taking this resolution, he observed the lieutenant coming out of the house of a female libertine where he usually passed his evenings, and assaulted him sword in hand. He struck at his legs with a view of bringing him to the ground, and with the first blow cut him quite through the right thigh. The poor man instantly fell, and the ensign ran to him to put him to death. But the lieutenant, who was courageous, and familiar with wounds and slaughter, having drawn his sword, notwithstanding his desperate situation, and raised himself for defence, cried out " Murder ! " as loud as he could.

The ensign, perceiving that some people were coming, and that the soldiers quartered thereabouts had taken the alarm, fled for fear of being caught, and, turning about again, pretended likewise that he had been brought there by the noise. Placing himself among the rest, and seeing that the leg was cut off, he concluded that though he was not dead, he must die of this wound ; and although he was exceedingly rejoiced at all this, yet he condoled with the lieutenant as much as if he had been his brother.

The next morning this accident was spread all over the city, and came to the ears of Desdemona, who being very compassionate, and not suspecting that this could occasion mischief to herself, expressed the greatest concern for the lieutenant's misfortune. The Moor drew from hence the worst of inferences, and said to the ensign :

" You must know that my simpleton of a wife is almost mad with sorrow for the lieutenant's accident."

" How could it be otherwise," said he, " as he is her life and soul ? "

" How," said the Moor, " her life and her soul ! I will separate her soul from her body. I should disgrace my manhood if I killed her not."

And discoursing together if poison or the dagger would be best, and not liking either the one or the other, the ensign said :

" A method has occurred to me that would satisfy you without

creating the least suspicion. The house where you live is very old, and the ceiling of your chamber is broken in many places. Desdemona might be beaten to death with a stocking full of sand, and no marks of this would remain on the body : when she is dead we will pull down a part of the ceiling, and bruise your wife's head ; then give out that a beam in falling has done this, and killed her. If you follow this course you will avoid all suspicion, and everyone will believe her death to have been accidental."

This savage advice pleased the Moor ; and waiting for a convenient opportunity, he concealed the ensign one night in a closet that communicated with their chamber. When they were in bed, the ensign, according to his instruction, made a noise in the closet, and the Moor immediately asked his wife if she had heard it.

" Yes," she answered.

" Get up, then, and see what it is."

Poor Desdemona obeyed, and as soon as she was near the closet-door the ensign rushed out, and, with the stocking that he had prepared, gave her a violent blow on the small of the back. She fell down scarce able to breathe ; but with what little force she had, she called the Moor to her assistance. He got out of bed and said to her :

" Most infamous woman, you are now to receive the just reward of your infidelity !—even so are those wives treated who, pretending to love their husbands, are untrue to their beds."

The poor woman hearing these words, and feeling that she was ready to expire from a second blow that the ensign had given her, said :

" Since the justice of this world is refused me, I invoke God's Justice in witness of my honour and my truth !"

And thus praying to God, she was finished by the impious ensign, who struck a third time. Afterwards they placed her in bed ; and, after breaking her skull, they drew down, as they had determined beforehand, a part of the ceiling. The Moor then called out for help, as the house was falling. The neighbours on this alarm ran thither, and found Desdemona dead under the beams. Her life had been so virtuous that everyone lamented her fate ; and the following day she was buried, to the great sorrow of the whole island.

But God, who is a just observer of the hearts of men, suffered not so great a crime to pass without the punishment that was due to it. So that the Moor, who had loved Desdemona more than his eyes, finding himself deprived of her, began to regret her so extremely, that he almost lost his senses, and went about the house looking for her in every room. Reflecting besides that the ensign had been the cause of his losing along with her all the enjoyments of life, and even

his own faculties, that villain became so insupportable to him, he could not bear the sight of him. Had he not feared the strict justice of the Venetians, he would have put him openly to death. But not being able to do this with safety to himself, he degraded him from his commission, and permitted him no longer to remain in the company.

Hence arose between them the most bitter enmity that can be conceived ; and the ensign, the greatest of all villains, studied only how he might be revenged on the Moor. He went to the lieutenant, who was cured and walked about with his wooden leg, and said to him :

“ The time is now come when you may be revenged for the loss of your leg ; and if you will come with me to Venice, I will tell you who the assassin was. Here I dare not inform you for many reasons ; but there I will be your witness in a court of justice.”

The lieutenant, who felt violently angry against his unknown enemy, thanked the ensign, and came away with him to Venice. When they were arrived, the ensign told him that the Moor was the person who had cut off his leg, because he suspected him of adultery with his wife, and that for the same reason he had murdered her, and afterwards given out that she had been killed by the ceiling's falling in upon her.

The lieutenant, on hearing this, immediately accused the Moor before the Council of the injury done to himself, and the murder of Desdemona ; and the ensign being called as a witness, asserted the truth of both these accusations. He added that the Moor had communicated to him the whole project with a view of persuading him to execute both these crimes ; and when he had murdered his wife from the impulse of a furious jealousy, he had related to him the manner in which he had put her to death.

The Venetian magistrates, hearing that one of their fellow-citizens had been treated with so much cruelty by a barbarian, had the Moor arrested in Cyprus and brought to Venice, where, by means of the torture, they endeavoured to find out the truth. But the Moor possessed force and constancy of mind sufficient to undergo the torture without confessing anything ; and though by his firmness he escaped death at this time, he was, after a long imprisonment, condemned to perpetual exile, in which he was afterwards killed, as he deserved to be, by his wife's relations.

The ensign returned to his country, where, still continuing his old practices, he accused one of his companions of having attempted to murder a nobleman who was his enemy. The man was taken up and put to the torture, and, denying firmly the crime laid to his charge, his accuser was also put to the torture ; where he was racked so violently that his vitals were injured, and upon being con-

ducted home he died in great agony. Thus was the divine vengeance executed against those who had murdered the innocent Desdemona.

The ensign's wife, who had been informed of the whole affair, after his death thus circumstantially related the story.

GIOVAMBATTISTA GIRALDI CINTHIO

FILARGIRO THE MISER

THERE was a Greek merchant from Corfu, who, having trafficked in various parts of Italy, at length settled in Mantua. His name was Filargiro, one of the most avaricious characters in the world ; for though he had realised a handsome property, all his thoughts were bent upon amassing more and more, his avarice still increasing with the increase of his wealth.

It happened that on returning one day from a sale of some of his goods, with a purse of four hundred gold crowns, while engaged in transacting other business, he was unlucky enough to lose the whole sum, nor was he aware of his loss until he reached home. Arriving there, he opened an immense chest containing many thousand crowns, and on preparing to add the four hundred to the number, he was struck dumb with astonishment to find that they were gone. He uttered an exclamation of horror every time he put his hand into each of his pockets, till, convinced at last that his loss was but too true, he ran off in great consternation along the path he had come, inquiring of the very dogs he met on the way whether they had seen or seized upon his treasure. He was quite confounded when he reached the place where he had first received the money, without obtaining the least tidings of it.

Almost overwhelmed with despair, he suddenly bethought him, as a last resource, to apply to the Marquis, entreating that a public crier might be instantly sent forth, and offering the sum of forty crowns for the recovery of his treasure. With great courtesy the Marquis acceded to his request, expressing himself at the same time concerned to witness the excessive affliction under which the unfortunate Filargiro seemed to labour.

The reward was accordingly proclaimed, and the gold soon afterwards made its appearance in the hands of one of those aged old ladies, who, being great devotees, always walk with their eyes upon the ground as they come from church. In this way she discovered the lost treasure, and fearful lest her conscience should be loaded with such a weight of gold, though extremely poor, she would have

been very greatly perplexed in what way to act, had she not luckily heard the crier announcing the reward of forty crowns, which she hoped she might receive with a safe conscience. Observing her destitute appearance, the Marquis very humanely inquired whether she had any means of procuring her subsistence, and whether she had no one to assist her.

"I have nothing," she replied, "but what I gain by the work of my hands and the help of one daughter; we weave and spin, signor, to earn as much as we want, living in the fear of the Lord in the best way we are able. My daughter, to be sure, I should wish to see married before I die, but I have nothing to give her for a portion."

The Marquis, on hearing the poor woman's account of herself, highly praised her integrity in thus restoring what she might so easily have reserved for herself and for a marriage-portion for her daughter; observing that it was an action of which he feared that few others, under the same temptation, would have been capable. He then summoned the merchant, informing him that the lost treasure was found, and requesting him at the same time to put into the poor woman's hands the stated reward.

The raptures of the miser were truly amusing when he beheld and seized upon the gold, even in the presence of the Marquis; but on hearing the demand of the stipulated sum, his countenance again fell, and he began to think how he could possibly withhold the promised reward. Having numbered the pieces once or twice exactly over, though he found them perfectly correct, he turned towards the old woman, saying:

"There are four-and-thirty ducats short of the sum which I put into this bag."

The old lady appeared extremely confused at this accusation, exclaiming in a distressed tone to the Marquis:

"Oh, signor, can that be possible? Is it likely I should have stolen thirty-four ducats, when I had it in my power to possess myself of the whole? No; believe me, noble signor, I swear, as I value my hope of heaven, that I have restored the exact sum which I found on my return from church; not a single farthing have I taken out."

But the miserly old wretch continuing to affirm most solemnly that the ducats were in the same bag with the crowns, and that she must consider them as a sufficient remuneration, the affair seemed to perplex the Marquis not a little. Yet when he reflected that the old miser had only mentioned the four hundred crowns in the first instance, he began to suspect his design of imposing upon the poor woman in order to save the paltry sum offered as a reward.

The Marquis felt the utmost indignation at the discovery of this

deceit, believing no punishment to be too severe for this despicable breach of faith ; but checking his rising passion for a moment, he reflected that the most effectual chastisement he could bestow upon the miser's attempt to impose upon the magistracy would be to make him fall into the very snare he had laid for another. With this view he thus addressed the merchant :

" And why did you not mention the full amount of your loss before proclaiming the reward ? "

" I overlooked it ; I quite forgot it," was the reply.

" But it seems somewhat strange that you, who appear so particular about trifles, should not have recollected the circumstance of the ducats. And as far as I can understand, you wish to recover what is not your own. I mean to say that this bag of gold could never have belonged to you at all, since the sum you first mentioned is not to be found in it. I imagine the real owner to be myself, since a servant of mine lost exactly the sum here contained on the very same day you pretend to have lost yours."

The Marquis then turned towards the old woman, observing :

" Since it is clear that the money is none of his, but mine, and you have had the good luck to find it, pray keep it : the whole is your own ; present it as a wedding-gift to your daughter. If it should happen that you meet with another purse, containing the ducats as well as the crowns, belonging to this gentleman, I beg you will return it to him without demanding any reward."

The poor lady expressed her gratitude to the Marquis for this generous mark of his favour, and promised to observe his directions in everything.

The wretched merchant, finding that the Marquis had truly penetrated into his motives, and that there was not a chance of succeeding in his nefarious design, declared that he was now quite willing to pay the reward he had promised, if she restored the remaining money, which was indisputably his own.

But it was now too late. The Marquis, turning towards him with an angry air, threatened to punish him for such a disgraceful attempt to defraud another of so large a sum, since, from his own account, it could not possibly be his.

" Get out of my presence, and beware how you exasperate me further. If this good woman should be fortunate enough to meet with the purse, with the exact amount you mention, she has promised to restore it to you untouched. That I think is enough."

Without venturing to answer a single word, the unhappy Filargiro was compelled to leave the place, unaccompanied by his newly-recovered treasure, and filled with sorrow and regret at having refused to fulfil the conditions he had made. The poor old woman,

on the other hand, went away overjoyed with her unexpected good fortune, and full of gratitude to the Marquis. She hastened to impart the happy tidings to her daughter, who, after having long indulged a vain attachment, had at length the pleasure of being united to the object of her choice, at the expense of the avaricious old merchant.

GIROLAMO PARABOSCO

1510-1557

FAUSTINO AND THE MEDDLESOME TRADESMAN

THERE formerly resided in the rich and beautiful city of Bologna a brave and intelligent youth of the name of Faustino, whose birth and accomplishments entitled him to rank among the noblest and proudest of the place. To these gifts of nature and of fortune was added a susceptible heart, and he soon became deeply enamoured of a young lady of exquisite beauty, whose name was Eugenia, and who in a short time seemed inclined to return his passion with equal tenderness and truth.

Such was her lover's extreme desire of beholding her, that he availed himself of every opportunity and encountered every risk to enjoy her society, frequently being in wait for hours to catch a mere glimpse of her, and employing numberless emissaries to instruct him as to her motions. Though the young lady's parents had been unable to extort any confession of her attachment from her own lips, they were at no loss to perceive it, and endeavoured to obviate the danger to be apprehended from its indulgence, believing that the young lover, on account of his superior rank and fortune, entertained no serious intentions of making her his wife. With this view they kept a very strict watch over their daughter, debarring her from the visits, and even from the sight of Faustino, as much as they possibly could.

Yet her mother, being of a religious turn of mind, was unwilling that she should relinquish her usual attendance on divine worship, and herself accompanied her daughter every morning to hear mass at a church near their own house, but at so very early an hour, that not even the artisans of the city, much less the young gentry of the place, were stirring. And there she heard service performed by a priest expressly on her own account, though several other persons might happen to be present who were in the habit of very early rising.

Now among these was a certain corn merchant, who had been

established only for a short time in Bologna. His name was Ser Nastagio de' Rodiotti, a man who had driven many a hard bargain and thriven wonderfully in his trade, but of so devout a turn withal, that he would not for the world have made an usurious contract, or even speculated to any extent, without having first punctually attended mass, believing doubtless that so good an example more than counterbalanced, in the eye of Heaven, the evil consequences of his actions. And these were certainly very great, especially in the way of raising the price of bread by his vast monopoly of that necessary article of life.

Such, however, was his exemplary conduct in attending church, that he lost not a single opportunity of showing himself there among the earliest of the congregation, having afterwards the consolation to reflect that he had discharged all his religious duties and was ready for business before a great portion of his fellow-citizens were stirring.

Now in a short time it also reached the ears of Faustino, through the good offices, it is supposed, of the young lady, that mass was to be heard every morning at a certain church, with every particular relating to the devotees who attended and the nearest way thither.

Rejoiced at this news, her lover now resolved to rise somewhat earlier than he had been accustomed to do, that he might avail himself of the same advantage that the lady enjoyed in beginning the day with religious duties. For this purpose he assumed a different dress, the better to deceive the eyes of her careful mother, being perfectly aware that she merely made her appearance thus early with her daughter for the sake of concealing her from his sight.

In this way the young lady had the merit of bringing Faustino to church, where they had the pleasure of gazing at each other with the utmost devotion ; except indeed when the unlucky tradesman whom we have just mentioned happened to place himself, as was frequently the case, exactly in their way, so as to intercept the silent communion of souls. And this he did in so vexatious a manner, that they could scarcely observe each other for a moment without exposing themselves to his searching eye and keen observation.

Greatly displeased at this kind of inquisition into his looks and motions, the lover frequently wished the devout corn-dealer in purgatory, or that he would at least offer up his prayers in another church. Such an antipathy did he at length conceive to Ser Nastagio, that he resolved to employ his utmost efforts to prevail upon him to withdraw himself from that spot. Revolving in his mind a great variety of plans, he at last hit upon one which he believed could not fail to succeed, and in a manner equally safe and amusing. With this view he hastened without delay to the officiating priest, whom he addressed in the following pious and charitable strain :

"It has ever been esteemed, my good Messer Pastore, a most heavenly and laudable disposition to devote ourselves to the relief of our poorer brethren, and this you doubtless know far better than I can inform you, from the fact of our blessed Saviour having actually appeared on earth to redeem us from our sins. But though every species of charity is highly commendable, that which seeks out its objects without waiting to be solicited far transcends the rest. For there are many who, however destitute, feel ashamed to come forward for the purpose of begging alms. Now I think, my worthy pastor, that I have of late observed one of these deserving objects in a person who frequents your church. He was formerly a Jew, but through the mercy of Heaven, which never ceases, not long ago he became a Christian, and one whose exemplary life and conduct render him in all respects worthy of the name. Yet, on the other hand, there is not a more destitute being on the face of the earth, while such is his modesty that I assure you I have frequently had the utmost difficulty in persuading him to accept of alms. It would really be a very meritorious act, worthy of the excellent character I have heard of you, were you to touch some morning upon his cruel misfortunes, relating his conversion to our faith, and the singular modesty with which he attempts to conceal his wants. This would probably procure for him a handsome contribution; and if you will have the kindness to apprize me of the day, I will take care to bring a number of my friends along with me, and we shall be sure to find this poor fellow seated in your church, where I know he is often employed in listening gratefully to your spiritual advice and consolation."

Our kind-hearted priest, impelled only by pure zeal and charity, cheerfully complied with the wily lover's request. He proposed, then, as the most favourable occasion, the next Sunday morning, when a large assemblage of people would be present, regretting that he had not been sooner made acquainted with the affair.

Faustino next gave the priest an accurate description of the features, person, and dress of our unfortunate corn merchant, observing that the poor man always appeared neat and clean, so that he could not possibly mistake him. Then taking leave of the good friar, he hastened to communicate this piece of mischief to some of his youthful companions, all of whom now awaited with great impatience for the approaching Sunday. Punctually, on its arrival, were they found assembled at the church, even early enough to hear the first mass, and there Messer Nastagio was seen stationed at his usual post, surrounded by a crowd of people collected for the purpose of witnessing the consecration of the place. When the Gospel and the Creed were finished, the good priest paused and looked about him; then wiping his forehead and taking breath for

a while, he again addressed the congregation, opening his subject as follows :

" Dearly beloved brethren, you must be aware, for our Saviour Himself has enlightened you on that head, and I have myself likewise insisted upon it as well as I could ; you must be aware, I say, that the most pleasing thing you can do in the eyes of the Lord is to show your charity towards poorer Christians, loving and assisting them according to their wants, as far as lies in your power. I trust, therefore, I shall not have much difficulty in persuading you to show the fruits of this good seed of charity in the manner I desire. For as I know you are not wanting in charity, but rather abounding in good works, I am not afraid to inform you that there is a most deserving yet destitute object before you, who, though too modest to urge your compassion, is in every way worthy of it. Pray take pity upon him ; I commend him to your kindness. Behold him," he cried, pointing full at Ser Nastagio ; " lo ! thou art the man. Yes," he continued, while the corn merchant stared at him in the utmost astonishment, " yes, thou art the man ! Thy modesty shall no longer conceal thee from the eyes of the people, which are now fixed upon thee. For though thou wert once an Israelite, my friend, thou art now one of the lost sheep which are found, and if thou hast not much temporal, thou hast a hoard of eternal, wealth."

He addressed himself during the whole of this time, both by words and signs, to Ser Nastagio, yet the poor merchant could by no means persuade himself, against the evidence of his own reason, that he was the individual pointed out. Without stirring, therefore, from the spot, he somewhat reluctantly put his hand into his pocket, so far conquering his avarice as to prepare to bestow his alms in the same manner as the rest of the congregation. The first person to present his contribution was the author of the trick, who approaching the spot where the merchant stood, offered his alms, and, in spite of Ser Nastagio, dropped them into his hat, making a sign to the people expressive of his admiration at the poor man's modesty. And though the incensed tradesman exclaimed in an angry tone to the young lover, " I have a longer purse than thou hast ears, man ! " it availed him nothing.

The good priest pursued his theme without noticing Ser Nastagio's remark, except by saying :

" Give no credit to his words, good people, but give him alms—give him alms ; it is his modest merit which prevents him from accepting them." Then once more directing his attention to the confused and angry merchant, he exclaimed :

" Do not look thus ashamed, but take them—take them ! for believe me, good friend, many greater and better men have been reduced to the same piteous plight, yea, even worse than that you

are now in. You should rather consider it as an honour than otherwise, inasmuch as your necessities have not been the consequence of your own misconduct, but solely arise from your embracing the light of truth, and becoming a disciple of our Lord."

The priest had no sooner ended than there was a general rush of the whole congregation towards the place where the astonished merchant stood, endeavouring who should be the first to deposit their donations in his hands, while he in vain attempted to resist the tide of charitable contributions which now poured in upon him on every side. He had likewise to struggle against his own avarice, no less than against the officious donors of alms, for he would willingly have received the money, though he did all in his power to repulse their offers.

When the tumult had at length a little subsided, the incensed merchant began to attack the priest in the most virulent terms, until the preacher was almost inclined to suspect that he must really in some way have been misinformed as to the proper object of his charity. He then began to make his excuses, as well as he could, for the error into which he had fallen ; but the lover's purpose was accomplished and the need could not be recalled. For it was soon reported that Ser Nastagio, the corn merchant, had that very morning been recommended to the charitable notice of the congregation as an example of true conversion from the Jewish to the Christian creed. This story was quickly circulated throughout the whole city, to the infinite amusement of all its inhabitants, more especially of the young lovers, who had now full leisure once more to contemplate each other's perfections, free from the observation of Ser Nastagio, who was never known to enter that church again.

PIETRO FORTINI

D. 1562

THE HEROISM OF FIORDESPINA

IN the noble city of Spoleti, in Umbria, there resided, not many years ago, a young man of the name of Anton Luigi Migliorelli, nobly born, but of a strange and whimsical disposition. Being also of a sanguine temperament, combined with too little judgment, he had the misfortune to imagine himself in love with a very beautiful and accomplished young lady, sprung from one of the first families in Spoleti, whose name was Fiordesina.

What rendered the affair worse, she had already bestowed her hand in marriage upon another, a wealthy citizen of good descent, called Filolauro, from which his lady most generally went by the name of Fiordesina Lauri.

In point of manly beauty and accomplishments, Filolauro was in no way unworthy of possessing so charming a companion ; nor do I believe that throughout all Italy there was a similar instance of conjugal union, happiness, and fidelity. Such, indeed, were the mutual sacrifices, the devotion, and tenderness which they invariably displayed, as to afford a perfect pattern of the respective characters and the conduct to be observed in so intimate a union. Their happiness seemed as if it were too exquisite and unalloyed to last ; and the secret fiend that was about to invade the Eden of their love and repose was already at work, inspiring the soul of Anton Luigi with thoughts equally dangerous to their safety and their honour. Ardently bent upon the pursuit of every object in which he engaged, and having frequent opportunities of enjoying the society and observing the charms and accomplishments of the lovely Fiordesina, he grew so deeply enamoured of them, that in a short time he felt himself unable to control the expression of his feelings.

Yet, after having adopted every expedient in his power, all the arts and flatteries of which he was the master, he had the mortification to find that he not only made no progress in her good opinion,

but that she did not even deign to notice his numerous efforts to conciliate and please her. Equally piqued and impassioned, he vowed to be revenged upon her supposed pride and indifference ; while he was compelled at the same time to conceal his attentions as much as possible, as the manners of the people of Spoleti were far more strict in this respect than those of many other places, persons of both sexes being in the habit of revenging themselves upon very slight provocation, and even of bearing arms, when occasion required, in open field against their enemies. And there is no point upon which they are more eager to proceed to extremities than in regard to the honour of their women, so that they will scarcely permit the breath of heaven to play upon the faces of their married dames of rank, while the husbands, on the other hand, are not permitted to show the least regard for single ladies.

Thus our unfortunate lover found himself rather awkwardly situated, his feelings being about as unpleasant as those of a culprit preparing for his final journey, since his beloved Fiordesquina paid no more attention to him than if there had been no such person in the world, a behaviour which he felt far more difficult to bear than if she had honoured him with her resentment, or even her aversion and contempt.

In this dilemma he believed the wisest as well as the shortest way would be to put a period to his existence ; but always when he was on the point of executing his threat, the idea that he was for ever leaving the beautiful Fiordesquina flashed across his mind, and he relinquished it. Still he conceived it quite incumbent upon him either to die like a true lover or win the lady's regard, and with this magnanimous resolution he watched his first opportunity of obtaining a final interview with the lady.

Happening to hear that Filolauro was about to accompany a party of young men on an excursion of pleasure into the country, he had no sooner watched the servant who followed him fairly out of sight, than he hastened to his house, but had the mortification to perceive the beloved object in company with two of her youthful companions. Upon this his exasperation was such as to mount to a degree of frenzy, and being in a most favourable mood for listening to the counsels of our great adversary, who is never known to neglect such happy opportunities of adding to the number of his subjects, he resolved in one way or other to bring the matter to a conclusion, whether it were by dagger, rope, or poison, that very evening.

With this view he continued to keep watch until after Filolauro's return, who, being accustomed to walk out with his friends, sometimes as far as the Borgo San Maffio, when the evening was fine, upon this occasion did not take leave of them until near midnight. His beautiful wife, whose thoughts were ever with him in his absence,

anxious at the lateness of the hour, was now eagerly looking out for him, after having prepared what viands she imagined would prove most agreeable on his return. Filolauro had just reached the piazza near the fort, close to his own house, when he was met by Antonio Luigi full of the most desperate designs, who, drawing his sword, cried out in great fury : " At last, villain, thou art dead ! " at the same moment wounding him severely.

" Ah ! traitor," exclaimed the other, " this to me ! " and rushing upon him, he closed with him before he could make his escape.

The noble lady, overhearing some disturbance, and recognising her consort's voice, with the courage that distinguished the ladies of Spoleti, instantly seized her husband's javelin that lay at hand, and rushed to the door. There she indeed beheld him struggling in the grasp of his assassin, while his blood stained the ground upon which they fought ; and sufficiently distinguishing the combatants by the light of the moon, with the strength of an Amazon, she passed the weapon through the body of Anton Luigi at a single blow. He instantly fell dead at her feet, while she, crying out to her husband that he was only wounded, besought him to take refuge in the house.

By the time she had assisted him back and restored the javelin to its place, a numerous crowd was collecting upon the spot, some of whom, observing the way they took, followed them into the house, where they found the lady attempting to staunch her husband's wounds, at the same time trying to encourage him and calling out for assistance. Discovering no weapon but the sword lying by the side of the deceased, they were unable to account for what they saw ; and having borne the body of Anton Luigi into an adjoining church and procured surgical aid for the wounded man, the people gradually dispersed.

On the following morning, the governor, hearing of the homicide, and no one being accused of it, thought it somewhat strange, and instituted a more strict inquiry. Being a native of Lucca, of severe character, and not very kindly disposed towards the ladies of Spoleti, he despatched his officers at once to the residence of the fair Fiordes pina, with orders to seize her, together with her husband, the last of whom, wounded as he was, they threw into a dungeon.

His unhappy wife was next conducted bound into the hall allotted for the execution of assassins, where, the evidence of some persons in the crowd being taken, she was actually condemned by her merciless judge to suffer the torture of the question. But rather than accuse either her husband or herself of having committed such an act, which she had reasons for knowing that her inexorable judge would never admit to have been done in self-defence, she chose to submit, with the fortitude of a martyr, to everything that his cruelty could devise. Moved with pity at her sufferings, several of the

spectators voluntarily came forward to prove that no weapon except that of the deceased had been found upon the spot, and that it was hardly likely that a single woman could have deprived a soldier of his own sword and of his life.

To this the savage tyrant only replied that such was more probably the case than that so noble a youth should have destroyed himself ; and upon this he commanded the executioners to proceed. When, however, the populace, who believed her to be innocent, heard her renewed cries, there ran a confused murmur among the crowd, that, gradually assuming a louder and more angry tone, reminded the cruel governor that he had to deal with the proud and daring natives of Spoleti.

Finding his victim resolutely bent against confession, he began to take the alarm, and ordering her to be set free, he consoled himself with the hope of inflicting still heavier punishment upon her husband. For this purpose he had him brought forth, and condemned to suffer yet more terrific pains than had been inflicted upon his wife.

The moment, however, she beheld him in the presence of their ferocious tormentor, she was unable to bear the very idea, much less the sight, of the most beloved object on earth sharing with her the same fate. Although instant death became the penalty of her confession, yet, in order to spare him the suffering she had herself so nobly borne, she thus addressed the governor :

“ Unbind that gentleman, signor. Never let it be said that a savage and remorseless tyrant, such as thou art, had it in his power to inflict his savage torments upon the limbs of my honoured lord. No, it was I who did the deed. Hear me, I say ! I alone smote the assassin of my husband dead at my feet. Oh ! ye just heavens, ye noble people of Spoleti, be near me ; aid me in my utter woe ; let him not deprive me of the only object that is dear to these eyes ! ”

At once surprised and grieved to hear her declare herself guilty of an act by a confession which the severest tortures had failed to wring from her, the spectators, as well as the governor himself, struck with the excessive proof of affection which it displayed, were inclined to consider it as little less than miraculous. What must have been the excess of tenderness and attachment that could excite the soul of a delicate woman to such an unexampled degree of heroism and magnanimity as to confess, out of pity and affection for her husband, what she would otherwise have concealed under the infliction of torture and of death itself !

To such an appeal even the heart of the governor, callous and ferocious as he was, could no longer be insensible. Taken by surprise, astonished at the grandeur and beauty of sentiment it displayed, and of which he had formed no previous idea, after remaining lost in doubt and wonder for some moments, his aspect assumed a

perfectly opposite expression, and in milder tones than he had ever before perhaps uttered, he commanded the officers to unbind her husband. He next sent for the father of the deceased, requesting to know what course he wished to be pursued.

The poor old man, thus unhappily deprived of his son, yet aware that no cause of enmity had subsisted between the families, nobly came forward to state everything he knew relating to the unfortunate passion of his son, and boldly taxed the governor with the most culpable conduct in having omitted to receive his evidence until he had unjustly condemned the innocent to suffer. At the same time he tenderly embraced the unhappy prisoners, and weeping over the guilty conduct of his son, appealed to the feelings of the spectators, conjuring them to join in soliciting a free pardon, if pardon it could be called, where no offence had been committed, at the hands of the governor. The relenting feelings of the latter at length yielded to the energy and truth of the old man's appeal ; for, having liberated the captives, he descended from his judgment-seat, and, struggling with contending emotions, turned away from the spectators, and soon disappeared.

ANTON-FRANCESCO DONI

1513-1574

SAN GIOVANNI THE YOUNGER

THERE has lately risen up, in a place on the confines of Lombardy, a new saint, now ready to be added to the calendar. Having abandoned the profession of curing bodies, in which his conscience began to reproach him with having despatched nearly the whole list of his patients to another world, he undertook the more harmless cure of souls, induced by the same motive of enriching himself at the expense of others. For his cloak of religion, then, he assumed a lion's skin, in which he came to Piacenza, entitling his order—The Apostolic Rule of the Four Evangelists, in the Habit of the First Hermit, St. Paul.

This new invention he supported by a thousand other spiritual fabrications of the same kind, studying the most successful impostures of his predecessors, and persuading the good people, like a rogue as he was, to erect him a convent for his new disorder of monks, quite worthy of their great superior, whose creed was principally to lighten the pockets of their congregation and of simple wayfaring travellers, by virtue of the miracles and relics which they exhibited to view.

Thus, in a short time, from a death-dealing doctor he became a little spiritual despot, reconciling it better to his conscience to tyrannise over the minds than to torture the bodies of his patients ; until Fortune, who can ill support the sight even of a good man in prosperity, lent him a few such smart kicks in the exercise of his new functions from one who had detected his imposture, as to lead him to conclude he had gone somewhat too far, though he found it too late to retrace his steps.

In short, after having shorn his flock as close as any shepherd well could, he was himself overreached, exposed, and compelled to take to flight, by some superior master in the same art, whose subtlety exceeded even his own. For though he fought hard to maintain his spiritual government and again to recover his lost ground, it was all

in vain ; no new relics, no fresh miracles could avail him ; the charm of his reputation was flown, and a still more successful candidate was now elected to the throne.

In these circumstances he took to an ambulatory mode of warfare, proceeding from monastery to monastery, husbanding his relics and miracles in a most surprising manner, and exhibiting them only as necessity seemed to require. In the course of these his travels, the last and greatest of his impostures is well deserving of record, even among those preserved in the catalogue of San Ciappelletto.

It happened that, in journeying one day towards Nizza, he was taken seriously unwell ; so much so as to be obliged to seek refuge in a neighbouring convent, belonging to the friars of I know not what disorder, where he was glad to be able to repose. Here, as long as he had money enough to make himself comfortable, his residence was highly agreeable to the holy fathers, although the fame of his wicked impostures had reached the place before him ; but the moment his resources began to fail, there was a marked change for the worse in their conduct towards our San Giovanni.

Their whispers became louder, they began to consult the reputation of their monastery, and the patient could scarcely rest in his bed for their importunities to get rid of him and to send him to the hospital ; for as to themselves, they declared that they were heartily tired of him. In this way they went on day after day, worse and worse, as well as the patient, who by his condition seemed resolved to have the benefit of dying in their hands. There was, indeed, only about another hour's life in him, when they came to the resolution of removing him ; upon which, in order better to defeat their plan, he died in half an hour, congratulating himself that he had thus succeeded in laying his bones with them, like a pious monk, even against their will.

The whole fraternity, not a little perplexed how to act, and desirous of obviating the scandal which might attach to them of having received so notorious a delinquent under their protection, resolved to put the best face they could upon the matter, to give him all due funereal honours in a public and pompous display, to pronounce an oration, and clear his memory from the vile imputations cast upon it ; and if all this proved not enough to absolve them in the eyes of the people, to canonise him by the name of " Saint Giovanni the Younger " without delay.

For this purpose, the most specious and oratorical monk of the brotherhood was fixed upon to deliver the oration, who went through the whole service with so much credit both to himself and to the

deceased saint, that the people, not satisfied with giving mere empty applauses, immediately began a collection beyond expectation of the most sanguine of the order. Our hero, then, was unanimously made a saint in a style that would have excited the envy of his predecessor, San Ciappelletto, and proceeded to work various miracles accordingly. But for my own part, I do not give the least faith to these saints who excite the wonder and applause of the vulgar, confining it only to such as are duly approved and beautified by the Holy Church of the faithful at Rome.

FRANCESCO SANSOVINO
1521-1586

THE DISCOMFITED FOPS

THERE were once two spruce young gentlemen who had more reason to pique themselves upon their good descent than upon the strength of their mental endowments. To use a familiar expression much applied by the good people of Milan, they both belonged to the parish of Saint Witless, and from a great similarity of disposition, they had contracted so strict an intimacy, that they were seldom to be seen asunder. When they happened to be in other company, they invariably aimed at leading the conversation to points of fashionable interest, in which alone they were calculated to shine, displaying their abilities in criticising the tastes of others and indirectly complimenting each other. Their continued repetition of the same fashionable nonsense, so impertinently introduced upon all occasions, had at length the effect of wearying and disgusting all parties where their presence was tolerated.

During fine summer weather they were in the habit of wearing the most costly white silk costumes; their vests were of white velvet, their ruffs of the whitest cambric, their pantaloons and stockings of white silk, and their hats of white velvet with white feathers in them.

And yet they had the assurance to appear thus accoutred in public, displaying their feathers with all the vanity of peacocks, as they turned arm in arm along the piazzas, full of their own perfections, and eager to attract the notice of spectators, who failed not indeed to smile as they passed; a circumstance which these young sparks placed entirely to their own credit. So pestiferous did they at length become to society by this display of their vain folly and presumption, that whenever they appeared in a perfectly new suit, their friends invariably avoided them, as they were certain to be regaled with a dissertation upon French tailors and the newest points and lacings then in mode.

"Observe these linings! how well they sit upon this waistcoat! how brilliant are these feathers! By Jove! how nobly they wave with the least breath of air. Yet they would not sit well upon any

one, let me tell you ; there is an art in a man's wearing a handsome dress by no means common."

And in this way they would run on by the hour together. Among others who had thus suffered under their intolerable rattle was a sensible and spirited young fellow, who had a particular enmity to the race of fops, and made a solemn vow, in a moment of irritation, to hit upon some species of revenge that might tend to remove such a nuisance from society, and perhaps put the authors of it on their good behaviour in future. With this view he conceived a plan which he thought could not fail to produce a happy effect, and only waited for a good opportunity of carrying it into execution.

This soon occurred during the summer season, when our cavaliers were in the habit, as we have said, of assuming their white array, and when they frequented the neighbourhood of our more sensible friend's residence, in order to make themselves agreeable to a party of ladies who were accustomed to walk near his house. One evening, therefore, he stationed himself at his garden gate, as if enjoying the coolness of the air, expecting these two giddy sparks, who in a short time came fluttering by, having displayed their plumes to the amusement of the ladies, who had now returned home. Stepping suddenly forwards and seizing a hand of each, their friend declared he would make them his prisoners for the rest of the evening ; for he had just received some excellent wine, of which he wished to have their opinion.

They accepted his challenge, and, with a fashionable roll of their shoulders, accompanied him in, when, finding the servants busily clearing the dining-room, he invited the gentlemen to go and give him their opinion of his selection of wines as they lay in his vaults, where they might also taste it perfectly cool ; observing that he often went there when he found every other place in the world too hot for him. Each of them, then, seizing his glass, mightily amused at the idea, they followed their friend into the vaults, a servant preceding them with a torch, while his fellows were laughing at their master's humour in the room above, one of whom, being intrusted with the secret, had communicated it to all the rest.

Several guests in the drawing-room were likewise waiting the event, with no slight mirth exhibited in their countenances. While the glasses were filling, the two coxcombs were busily criticising the various sorts of wines submitted to their taste, and enjoying the coolness as they rambled about the vaults. Now there was a large vessel filled with water lying near for the purpose the host had in view. It was of such respectable dimensions as apparently to defy the exertions of a single person to remove it. Attracting the notice of his guests, the host, as if casually passing, observed :

" Large as you seem to think it, there is one of my fellows who can

throw it upon his shoulders and carry it upstairs for me whenever I please."

One of our fashionables, who likewise piqued himself upon his bodily prowess, instantly laid hands upon it, but finding it resist his efforts even to stir it, he pretty roundly swore he would wager a dozen of champagne that their host was mistaken. But the fact was again as positively affirmed, till the dispute growing warm on both sides, the young gentleman declared that it would be the fairest way to put it to the proof.

"I have no objection," returned the wily host; "here is the very rascal we were just speaking of; he has shoulders broad enough to bear the world: so take up that huge tub, you rogue, and walk. Show the gentlemen the way upstairs, and take heed you do not let it fall."

Forthwith he pitched it upon his neck; and the master leading the way, the two disciples of San Simpliciano somewhat imprudently followed in his rear. The steps were tolerably steep, and the porter, feigning great difficulty, just as he had reached the top, suddenly tripped, and sent the contents of the vessel back again, flying all abroad on every side. Strange was the confusion, and the sputtering, and the exclamations which the two unfortunate fashionables now made; still more strange was the sprinkling and spoiling of their delicate new garments, which truly cut a woeful figure. Instead of a pure white, they now exhibited all the colours in the rainbow, with the addition of black patches, which stuck to their fine ermine, while they sighed and sobbed with the effects of the cold bathing they had just received. The water had been deeply impregnated with ink and assafoetida, and with other nauseous drugs, to such a degree that neither of them was free from the taint for more than a twelvemonth.

The porter, however, had the humanity to prevent the tub itself from falling, which would otherwise have totally overwhelmed the dripping sparks, who were by no means made of such stout materials as to withstand the shock it might have occasioned, being of that brittle texture which, like glass, will bear no rough usage, though it can receive a polish. The rogue of a porter instantly took to his heels on viewing the awful ruin he had wrought, while his master, pretending to be in the highest degree offended at his negligence, hastened after him, leaving our poor heroes to digest the venom of his joke as they best could.

But not possessing wit enough to see into the jest, they shook hands before they left with the happy and triumphant host, who watched them, along with some of his guests, tripping homewards as fast as they well could, shivering as if in an ague fit, to the infinite amusement of all beholders.

SEBASTIANO ERIZZO

1525-1585

TIMOCRATES AND ARSINOË

AT the period when the tyrant Nicocles swayed the sceptre of Sicyon, alike feared and hated by its citizens, two only were found who, equally distinguished by their rank, their wealth, and their spirit, disdained longer to bear the intolerable weight of his oppression. Surpassing their fellow-citizens as well in courage as in rank, they were the first to conspire together how they might best achieve the freedom of their native place, though even by the death of its despotic ruler, aware that the seeds of liberty are best watered with the blood of its enemies.

With this view, having fixed upon a certain hour and spot, they waited with much anxiety for the period of its accomplishment, but seized with a sudden panic when the moment arrived, one of the two conspirators refused to proceed any farther in the affair. Not satisfied with this, and afraid of being anticipated by his colleague, he went instantly to the place of the tyrant, and the better to ingratiate himself, acquainted him with the whole transaction, affecting at the same time to have given ear to it only with a view of revealing the real author to the King, as was the duty of every loyal subject. Having in this manner been made acquainted with the full particulars of the conspiracy, Nicocles, giving entire credit to the account, despatched forthwith a company of his guards to the residence of Timocrates, with orders to level the gates with the ground and to bear the traitor alive into his presence.

The noble citizen was in this way seized and carried before the tyrant, who, having feasted his eyes with the sight of his victim, and thrown him into one of his most horrid dungeons, condemned him on the very same day to die. But as it was the custom of those times that such as were found guilty of capital crimes should be executed during the night within the walls of their dungeon, when their cries could not be heard, Timocrates was thus condemned to suffer on the following evening.

When tidings of this terrific punishment came to the ears of his poor consort, Arsinoë, who was most tenderly attached to her

husband, so great was her surprise and terror as well-nigh to deprive her of existence. On recovering sufficiently to dwell upon the dreadful subject, she long revolved every means that her affection could suggest of averting so heavy and unexpected a calamity. She well knew how worse than unavailing it would be to pour her prayers and tears at the feet of the tyrant, a measure that might crown their sufferings by bringing along with it the dishonour as well as the death of her husband. She resolved, then, to think and to act only for herself; and it was not long before her ingenuity supplied her with an idea, which with fearless breast she prepared to carry into speedy effect.

On the evening that her consort was to suffer, no sooner was it twilight, than, wrapping herself in a dark cloak and veiling her beauty in deep black crape, she took her fearful and solitary way, without acquainting a single friend with her purpose, towards the dungeon prepared for the tomb of all she held most dear. On her arrival, taking aside one of the guards, she besought him, bitterly weeping while she spoke, to permit her to see her husband for a few moments before he died, and to yield her the sad consolation of a last tear, a last embrace, without which they should neither of them die in peace. Touched at her deep and passionate distress, the rest of the guards gathered round her, and unable long to resist her entreaties, they all of them, catching the soft infection from each other, at length agreed to let her pass.

On beholding her husband, however, instead of longer giving way to womanly lamentations and tears, Arsinoë assumed all the fortitude of a heroine, boldly yet sweetly advising and consoling him, while she entreated him no longer to despair. Then, hastily acquainting him with her plan, she began to array him in her own dress, and having disguised his face in the thick veil, and thrown the cloak over his shoulders, she took one kiss, breathed a soft farewell, and quietly assumed his place.

The guards, believing that it was the lady returning apparently drowned in grief, offered no sort of opposition; and in a little while Timocrates was beyond the limits of the tyrant's sway.

But the hour was come when the executioner proceeded with the guards to receive his victim from their hands, bearing along with him the infernal implements of his trade. What was their surprise, on approaching nearer, to lay their unhallowed hands upon a gentle and beauteous lady, who was immediately borne by the executioner into the tyrant's presence, to learn in what way he was to proceed. Here she was received with scowling and terrific looks, while she appeared wholly unable to answer the threats and inquiries of the incensed Prince. Vainly attempting to hide her terror, she again and again burst into tears whenever she prepared to speak,

so as even to awaken some touch of compassion in the tyrant's obdurate breast.

"Be not so much alarmed, lady," he continued in an altered tone: "what is it you fear? Only reveal the real motives which led you to set my power at defiance, to rescue my prisoner, a traitor doomed to death, and to deceive my guards."

"It was not to defy you or deceive your guards I came," replied Arsinoe. "It was love, only love and pity for my unhappy husband that impelled me to it; and I would hazard much, much more, even more than life itself, did I possess it, for his sake. When the fearful tidings burst upon me, when I heard that he was condemned to suffer an ignominious death, and when I reflected upon his whole life and conduct, nor found the slightest cause for blame or for your princely displeasure, I was determined to peril everything for his rescue. This I have done, and succeeded; and I willingly yield me a victim, if such I must be, in his place. Yet I would still hope that you will not behold my affliction and my tears unmoved; but attribute all my error and my crime to the tender love I bore him, a love which grew up with our earliest years, and which is such that you must tear away my heartstrings before I can quietly see him perish. Surely, then, you cannot pretend to exercise any law against true and devoted affection: severe as you are esteemed to be, you would not punish me for feelings over which I have no control."

Such was the affecting appeal of the wretched Arsinoe, which produced so extraordinary an effect upon the mind of Nicocles that, cruel and unforgiving as he naturally was, and vehemently exasperated against Timocrates in particular, he yet felt his fury and indignation die away within him at the sound of her mournful words. He therefore admitted her conjugal affection to be a sufficient justification of her conduct, and dismissed her uninjured from his presence. But not so fortunate were the guards, whose humanity was deserving of a better fate. Against them his wrath burned with unmitigated fury.

"And now seize me those caitiff villains," cried the tyrant, "who, false to their trust, permitted access to my prisoner. Their blood be upon their own heads, for I will never consent to be thus wholly cheated out of my revenge"; and the unhappy guards were accordingly led to execution by the hired mercenaries of the tyrant.

In the course of a short time, Arsinoe, having obtained tidings of her husband, disguised herself in male attire, and, accompanied by a single faithful servant, fled secretly from her house, and joined the object of her love in a distant and secure retirement.

CELIO MALESPINI

1531-1611

THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF THE GRAND DUCHESS

THE bank of the Salviati was one of the numerous Florentine businesses established some years ago in the lovely town of Venice. In this bank there were many young men who wrote and kept the books, and among them was Pietro Buonaventura, a very handsome and courtly young Florentine.

Next to the bank, lived a Venetian gentleman of the house of the Capelli. He had a very numerous family, and one of his children, Bianca, was a pretty and gracious girl, and with her Buonaventura fell madly in love. Thanks to the closeness of the two houses and the convenient way in which they were built, Buonaventura was able to meet Bianca and tell her what love he bore her.

The girl thought he was one of the heads of the business, or at least a partner, and, liking his fine manners and handsome presence, she began to look on him with loving eyes. Their love increased day by day, and reached such a point that, under promise of marriage, they lived as husband and wife, without anybody knowing it, except an old nurse of Bianca.

The two lovers continued to see each other, and one evening, Bianca stayed with her lover in the neighbouring bank till dawn, having left open the door of her father's house that was only four steps away. The baker to the Capelli came to see if they wanted any bread. After he had whistled and knocked at the door, he was told to make the bread: and as he went away, noticing that the door was half open, and acting for the best, he shut it.

Hearing the baker's whistle, Bianca knew that it was time to depart. After sweetly kissing her betrothed husband, she rose up and went with him to the door to regain her father's house. There she found the entrance closed, and it so frightened her that she was beside herself and did not know what to do or say. Returning to Pietro, who usually waited until she had gone in, she told him she had found the door closed and could not understand how it had

occurred. Then, trembling like a reed in a storm, she fell into the arms of the young man.

Pietro comforted her, and said there was nothing to be afraid of. Rushing at once into the street, he called and whistled to the nurse to open the door. But all his efforts were in vain, for he could not make himself heard by the old dame. Already the light of dawn began to shine. So the two lovers, fearful of being discovered, resolved to fly the country, being persuaded that if they were found in such a situation they would be put to death.

Having then collected all their courage and their energy, with the little money and the clothes they could hastily get together—the girl only had a serge dress over her shift, as it was the height of summer—the two young people hurried on a ship, and, as secretly as they could, made their way to Florence. There they found shelter in the house of the father of Buonaventura, above San Marco place, not far from the Church of the Annunziata.

Although the father of Buonaventura was a Florentine citizen, he had but little wealth ; and, seeing that he had two more mouths to feed, he was obliged to dismiss his maidservant and get Bianca to do her work. For his own wife was too old to look after the house. The charming girl took charge of everything, and did it all lightly and gaily for several months.

At Venice, when the flight of the two lovers was discovered, the father and the relatives of the girl became furious, and their anger was increased by the fact that they were persons in a high position. They so managed the matter that an atrocious proclamation was published against the loving couple, sentencing them to be pursued and killed, even on foreign soil. When the fugitives heard of this ban they went cold to the bone with fright, and Bianca was so terrified that she never let herself be seen, and always worked in-doors at her household affairs.

As the lovers were living in this perilous position, the Grand Duke Francesco, by a happy chance, passed in his carriage under the windows of the house. Bianca, who had never seen him, raised the blind a little to get a good look, and her glance met that of the Grand Duke. The Lord of Tuscany was so moved that he put his head out of the carriage and stared at the window in the hope of seeing the young lady again : but it was in vain. A simple glance had sufficed to give birth, in the soul of the Grand Duke, to such a passion that he was most anxious to know who the girl was, and learn everything about her.

When he was informed of her miserable situation, his heart was filled with pity for her misfortunes and his desire to see her again increased. It was easy for him to observe her at the window, either when he went morning or evening to one of his estates called the

Casino where he remained till the dinner-hour, or when he went to mass at the Church of San Marco, close to the Buonaventura house, or to the Church of the Annunziata. Thus he found many occasions to steal another glance at Bianca.

But a great desire came to him to see her at closer range. He told this wish of his to a Spanish gentleman, whom, at an early age, the Grand Duke Cosimo had given him for governor and guardian. Mandragona, as the Spaniard was called, promised to bring the affair about. Going at once to his wife, he requested her to make friendly advances towards the mother of Pietro.

This was easily done. The two women, as is natural between persons of their sex, were not long in talking over their private affairs. La Mandragona, who knew how to conduct these operations, brought the talk round to Pietro and asked if he were married.

"Certainly, Signora," said the mother, "but in a very unfortunate way."

And she then told what had happened in Venice. The courtly dame feigned to feel a great compassion for Bianca, and said she would like to take her to the palace and see if she could help her.

"It would be a very difficult thing," said the other woman, "to get her to go out. She never leaves the house. She has no other dress but the one she wears, because we are so poor we could not buy anything for her. And she would be ashamed to appear before you in rags, seeing that she also is a beautiful lady of noble birth."

"We can easily remedy that," said La Mandragona, "by sending her some dresses, and then I shall be able to see her and get to know her."

"I do not know if she will agree to do so," said Pietro's mother, "without permission from her husband. I will do all I can to get her to come and see you, but I fear I shall not succeed. For she takes much pleasure in living in this humble retired manner without seeing anybody. My son has often asked her to go with me to mass at San Marco, but she has never cared to do so. Since the blessed hour when she entered our house, she has never stepped out of doors!"

"Use every effort, I pray you, to bring her to me," said La Mandragona. "I will send a carriage in which she can come in safety, without being seen by anybody. And tell her that my friendship, far from injuring her, may perhaps be a great help and a great benefit."

"I will not fail to do all I can to please you," said Pietro's mother.

Returning home, she began to talk with her daughter-in-law

and tell her, point by point, all that the great Court lady had said.

"Think of it," she said, "this lady is the wife of the first favourite of the Grand Duke. Her friendship is sure to be of help to you, and she may be able to obtain through her husband the safe conduct you so long for, to enable you to live in Florence. Then you will be protected from the power of your father who is so furious to get you in his hands."

When poor Bianca heard the talk about her safe conduct, though she still had no desire to leave the house and walk about Florence and become known to the townspeople, she was shaken from her first resolve, and promised to see the lady if her husband agreed.

Pietro was as anxious as his wife to obtain the safe conduct, and he thought it would be easy to obtain it through the wife of the favourite of the Grand Duke. So he gave his consent and word was sent to La Mandragona that she might despatch a carriage at a favourable opportunity.

A carriage soon came, and Bianca and her mother-in-law rode to the palace, where La Mandragona received them with much joy and many caresses. She led them into a splendid room and there they talked of a thousand things, and the lady again offered to get her husband to do all that was necessary to obtain the safe conduct. While they were talking, the favourite, Mandragona, entered the room, as though unaware of what was going on, and asked his wife to introduce him to her friends.

"They are," she answered, "two ladies who have need of our favour and our influence with the Grand Duke."

Then in a few words she told him the story of Bianca—a story he knew better than she did—and begged him to interest His Highness in the matter. The Grand Duke was in fact hidden in the room, and saw and heard everything. And he saw that, while Mandragona's wife was speaking, Bianca kept her eyes lowered, while such intensity of desire shone in them that, without her speaking, it was easy to see how passionately she longed for the safe conduct.

"All that you desire, Signora," said the favourite, when his wife had done, "is very little beside what I should like to do for you. I shall have little trouble in obtaining it, for the Grand Duke is so magnanimous and courteous that he is always quick to render justice to all who ask it of him, and especially to gracious ladies, whom he is bound to serve under the laws of chivalry. So take heart and be certain that all your wishes will be satisfied."

And saying this, he left the room. Bianca, gladdened by his offers and promises, began to talk with a happy heart, and her face shone with joy. Then La Mandragona took her by the hand.

"I should like, Signora," she said, "to show you our palace, and

see if you find in it anything resembling the great and superb buildings of your town. In the meantime, Signora Buonaventura, who looks tired, can rest until our return."

"Yes," said the old lady, "I have not enough breath left to climb up and down so many stairs."

So arm-in-arm, with smiling faces, Bianca and La Mandragona strolled about the palace, the building of which was not then completed. Bianca was astonished at the costly ornaments that abounded in every room, and was loud in her praises. They came at last into a very beautiful chamber, in which was a fine bed and a magnificent chest, and La Mandragona opened a drawer and took out a large number of jewels of high beauty and gave them one by one to the young lady, who looked at them with great admiration.

"Now I would like to show you," said La Mandragona, "some dresses that seem to me of the Venetian mode. Please wait a little, while I look for the keys of the chest in which they are kept."

Scarcely had she gone than the Grand Duke came in. At his sudden appearance, Bianca shook with fear, for in a flash she at once saw why she had been brought to the palace. Falling on her knees in a humble suppliant attitude, she cried:

"Since by an evil fate I have lost my parents, my liberty and my native country, and only my honour remains to me, I pray you be my protector and help me!"

"Fear nothing, Signora," said the Grand Duke, taking her by the arms and lifting her up, "I have not come here to do you wrong, but to console you and help you, for I know what misfortunes you have suffered. No! You must rejoice that you have at last found a protector, and be sure that on no occasion will you receive from me anything but favour and courtesy."

And making a bow he went away, leaving the lovely lady all pale and confused until La Mandragona returned, and said to her with a laughing face:

"Don't be surprised at the unlooked-for visit of the Grand Duke. At any moment, when we have almost forgotten his existence, he will arrive unexpectedly, and amuse himself by playing some prank either on me or on my girls. It seems to me you have given him a talking to, if I can go by the way his face reddened. How glad I am! After such a reprimand, he will not be so bold in the future."

"I said nothing to him," said Bianca, "but that I wished to keep my honour, and I begged him to be the guardian and the defender of my good name."

"And I assure you," said La Mandragona, "that he will do it. For he is not the sort of man to waste his time over a good woman like

you. But to come to the heart of things, I must tell you that you ought to feel happy that Heaven, in pity for your sufferings, brings such a strong arm to deliver you from your misfortunes. So hold tight to this arm and you will be happy and protected. There are very few women with a Grand Duke burning for love of them, and you can be sure of obtaining everything from him."

There was more talk of the same sort between the two ladies, and in the end the gentle Venetian lady consented to permit the amorous Grand Duke to sue for her favour. From day to day their love for each other increased, until the Grand Duke took Bianca for his wife and had her crowned Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

CELIO MALESPINI

THE TRANSFORMATION

MANY years ago there dwelt in the city of Ainalto a certain merchant, who, among his other speculations, was unlucky enough to venture in the matrimonial lottery, and to draw a very bold and artful woman for his wife. Now, his business frequently leading him to a distance from home, the lady was at full liberty to indulge her love of pleasure and power, neglecting no opportunity of domineering her household, and coquetting with the prettiest young fellows she could find.

One of these at length became so particular a favourite as to excite the notice of one of the merchant's neighbours, who often amused himself with counting the number of visits paid to her by her gentle cavalier during her husband's absence. He next resolved to add to his amusement by acquainting the poor gentleman with his suspicions, who, expressing all the surprise and concern possible upon the occasion, thanked his friend for his advice, observing that he would take care to provide a remedy. And in order to convince himself the more effectually of what he did not in the least wish to know, he fixed to return suddenly to his own house the very first night he should be supposed to be at a distance. So, to be as good as his word, he feigned a pretty long journey, but retracing his steps towards evening, he went straight to his friend's house, situated just opposite his own, whence he could easily descry the motions of his enemy, if such indeed were lurking about his premises that night.

His friend, who had stationed himself at his side, when he was just on the point of dropping to sleep, about midnight was suddenly roused by an exclamation of horror from the poor merchant, and looking out of the window beheld the lover standing at his usual station. The door not being immediately opened, the latter took a few turns before the house with an easy and confident air, by no means an auspicious sign in the eyes of our jealous spectator, who pronounced himself to be a very unhappy man.

With his friend's advice, therefore, he resolved to employ the following stratagem. After disguising himself as well as he could, he very quietly stepped downstairs, and joining the gentleman upon the terrace, he accosted him in a low tone as follows :

"My mistress, Signor, knows very well who it is, and has sent me to say, that, fearing her husband's return, she wishes me to introduce you some other way into the house, lest any one should observe you walking before the door."

Signor Drudo, believing him of course one of the lady's domestics, consented to accompany him, and upon approaching another entrance, the husband took a key from his pocket, and led the unsuspecting lover up a back staircase into a room where lay a huge chest.

"My mistress begs me to conceal you a few moments in this trunk, Signor, until my foolish master goes, when you may depend that she will not delay a moment in coming for you herself, and will give you the best entertainment that the house can afford. So jump in, Signor; plenty of room and plenty of air; and you will not have to wait many minutes."

Accordingly, with a becoming deference for the lady's orders, the bold youth stepped in, and the husband, locking him fast, put the key into his pocket and hastened back again to the house of his friend.

"He is caught!" he cried; "the rat is fast in the trap. What will be the best way, think you, of disposing of him?"

This soon became a very general question, all his friends and relations being summoned to decide upon it, especially the female portion, who were quite delighted to hear the tidings, having long owed the merchant's wife a grudge for the haughtiness and intolerance of her manners. To add to the publicity of the affair, the lady's parents were roused from their beds in the middle of the night and requested to attend; and even her brothers and sisters, and cousins from the country, were not spared upon the occasion: all being assembled in council to strike the souls of the guilty pair with tenfold awe, confusion, and despair.

With this charitable view the whole procession directed their steps towards the house of their victims, while in the meantime the unhappy lover had been rather anxiously awaiting the arrival of his beloved, who on her part was looking as anxiously out of the windows, wondering what could possibly delay him so long, as he was accustomed to anticipate the hour. Hearing footsteps passing in all directions but none approaching near, the poor lover, already half stifled, began to kick and cry out with all his strength, in which he was successful enough to attract the lady's ear in the next apartment, who inquired in a great fright what it was.

"It is I, my dear soul," returned a feeble voice; "I am just dead. I wonder you can be so cruel as to keep me here."

"Why, how did you get there, in the name of all the saints? It is none of my doing, I am sure."

"I do not know," said the voice, "but your servant put me here by your orders, lest your husband should see me."

"O Lord, help me, then!" she cried. "I see how it all is; it is my husband's doing. It is all discovered. What, in the name of Heaven, shall we do?"

"Let me out by all means," cried the voice, "unless you wish to see me perish."

"Oh dear! but my husband has got the key and it is impossible to break it open; besides, he would murder me if I did."

"Look for another key, then," said the voice.

"That is a good thought; so I will," said the lady; and directing her search very effectually, she hit upon the right key, and was happy enough to liberate her lover.

Once free, after drawing many deep sighs, not for love, but to recover his breathing, he was about to take his leave of the lady and secure his escape while there was yet time, when, seizing him half frantic in her arms, she conjured him not to abandon her alone to death and to dishonour.

"But what can be done?" cried he; "how can you contrive to escape?"

"Why," said she, "if we could put somebody else into the trunk, there might be some excuse for letting you out."

"True," said her lover; "but who can we find to take my place so that I may go, for it is quite time?"

"Now I think of it," returned the lady, "there is a young ass in the stable; if you would assist me to get it here, and shut it up in the box!"

"Certainly I will do that," replied the lover, though not much flattered at the idea of his successor; "I will do that; and let us go about it quickly."

So, having achieved this feat and kissed his fair deliverer tenderly, he ran out of the house; while the lady, having locked up the little donkey, very quietly went to rest. Ere long, however, she was roused by a tremendous noise at the door; all the relations she had in the world were arrived, and she went downstairs to welcome them herself.

"Now," cried the enraged husband, rushing in followed by the whole troop, "I will convince you of the truth of all I have said. Go in, go in! and you shall take this vile daughter of yours home with you after we have despatched her wretched paramour before her face!"

This they one and all promised him to do, proceeding with lighted torches and drawn swords to the scene of action, and followed at a convenient distance by the women, extremely curious to behold the termination of the tragedy. The lady expressing the utmost aston-

ishment at these proceedings and the strange reception she met with on all hands, her husband, without deigning to reply, lent her a pretty severe box on the ear, a species of compliment which was as eagerly returned.

"Mind whom you have to deal with and what you say!" exclaimed the insulted fair one; "do you think I will be thus treated in the presence of my parents?"

"Oh, you vile, abandoned woman!" he returned; "what will you say when I show them your wicked paramour, whom we are going to kill before your face?"

And upon this a volley of abuse was launched on her from all sides, not a single one of her friends or relatives joining their voice to hers.

"Yes, go on, go on!" she cried; "call me by all the horrid names you please; for I have the satisfaction of knowing that you all lie in your throats; yes, you do, you do! or else you are all stark mad: my husband must have driven you out of your wits."

"Let us inquire of this chest," retorted he; "let us hear what that will say!"

"O villain!" cried his wife, "you know I never had the key in my life; and whoever you may have hidden there, I swear I have never had anything to say to him in all my life, and I trust that Heaven will help me, and make my innocence manifest to the world. Yes, and Heaven will interfere, for it is all a vile conspiracy to rob a poor inoffensive and injured woman of her chief crown and jewel, her innocence and honour!"

"Come, no whining!" cried her husband. "I have long known your practices; but I hardly thought that he could have made such a complete hypocrite of you: he seems to have taught you to some purpose indeed! Your time is at length come. I will give ample proof of your depravity! Come along, I am going to open the box. But first, my good friends, have your weapons ready, and draw closer round. Strike sure, and take good care he does not escape; for I can assure you he is a fierce and powerful fellow."

"Never fear," they all cried at once; "we will do his business; I think we are a match for him!" and wrapping their mantles around them, and brandishing their swords, they entreated him to proceed.

One of them even cried in an insulting tone:

"Have you confessed yourself, villain? for you are likely to have no other priests to officiate than ourselves."

As the jealous husband was unlocking the trunk, his mother and sisters turned their heads aside, as if desirous of shunning the horrid sight, even the shedding of a wicked man's blood.

With hands and eyes intent upon the approaching slaughter the

men of vengeance stood ; the box opened, and the ass, uneasy at having been so long confined, got upon his legs, and the better to take his breath, brayed a long and discordant welcome to his friends. Such was the sudden shock he gave them that some of the spectators fainted ; the more fortunate ran away, and great was the terror and confusion before order could be restored. The more devout cried out that it was a miracle sent to prove the innocence of the lady and the wicked design of injuring her reputation ; so that with one accord changing the object of their resentment, they began to revile the poor merchant, and accused him of the most flagitious conduct in attempting to ruin the reputation of his own wife : indeed, had he not quickly sought refuge elsewhere, the lady's brothers would have consigned him to the fate they had prepared for her lover. It was some time before he was again received into favour by the lady and her friends, nor was he ever afterwards known to make the least complaint.

SCIPIONE BARGAGLI

1541-1612

IPPOLITO AND GANGENOVA

AMONG other families that in times gone by are known to have ornamented the city of Siena, one of the most noble was the Saracini, a house which still preserves unsullied its ancient worth and splendour. In the long list of names that constituted its different branches we find mention of one Ippolito, the sole surviving heir of a distinguished cavalier. At the period we are about to refer to, he numbered no more than eighteen years, was extremely graceful and handsome in his person, of elevated mind and intellect, and much esteemed by his friends and fellow-citizens for the vivacity and courtesy of his manners.

Now it fell out, as is most frequently the case with youths of a fine temperament, that he became deeply enamoured of one of the most beautiful and attractive girls in all the city, whose surpassing charms and accomplishments were celebrated wherever she had been seen. Her name was Gangenova, the youngest of three daughters left to the care of a widowed mother, the relict of Messer Reame Salimbeni, whose family ranked among the first in Siena for numerous services rendered to the republic in periods of the greatest peril, though now, along with its arms and palaces, become altogether extinct, nothing of its past grandeur remaining but the name. The delight of all her relations, as well as of the society in which she moved, it was no wonder, then, that the fair Gangenova should so far have enthralled the soul of young Ippolito, that, by frequent contemplation of her beauties and accomplishments, he resolved to run all hazards in order to win her love. Nor had he, in the few opportunities permitted him of conversing with her, any reason for despair, since he rightly interpreted the tones and looks with which she occasionally addressed him.

But in consequence of the very strict superintendence of her mother, which was exercised with greater severity over Gangenova than over her elder sisters, the interviews of the lovers were very rare ; a system of intolerance so little in accordance with the open and ardent character of Ippolito, that, despising the very particular

forms and ceremonies which it extracted, he was apt to grow impatient for the enjoyment of a more unconstrained society with the object he adored. With this view he made known his wishes to the young lady's mother, leaving the terms of their future union, in the most liberal manner, wholly to her, and beseeching her only to grant him a little more of the society of her he loved. What was his surprise to receive a direct refusal, on the ground that it was the lady's duty as a mother to attend first to the disposal of her two elder sisters! an answer that threw the young lover into a paroxysm of mingled rage and despair.

The grief of Gangenova was little less than his own, and her affection, gathering strength by opposition, was indulged with double freedom upon receiving the sanction of such an offer. Aware at the same time that her lover's conduct in attempting to obtain an interview added only to the jealous caution of her mother, she was at a loss in what way to proceed, being so closely watched as scarcely to be allowed to breathe the air, much less to partake of the innocent sports and amusements to which young persons of her age are attached. It was impossible, however, to preserve so strict a watch as to deprive them of all kind of mutual intelligence, and Ippolito became acquainted with her unhappy situation. She even entreated of him, in pity to her, that he would discontinue his assiduous attentions, and either absent himself, or feign absence, during a short period, from the city, as she grew fearful of the extremities to which her friends in their anger might proceed. At the same time, she besought him to consider this as a proof of regard, not of coldness or indifference, as she would ever endeavour to show herself grateful, and worthy of the high opinion that he had so kindly and nobly avowed for her.

These tidings served at once to increase the passion that Ippolito already entertained, and the unhappiness he felt in being the unwilling cause of the least portion of suffering to her he loved, when he felt as if he could gladly have sacrificed his life to her happiness and repose. Still he exulted in the idea that she returned his affection, and he tried to flatter himself with the prospect of brighter days to come. And in order to convince her of the purity and disinterestedness of his attachment, he resolved, however difficult the task, to obey her wishes, and to leave for awhile his native place, giving out that he was gone upon a pilgrimage to the shrine of San Jacomo of Galicia. He was, moreover, desirous of thus proving the sincerity of the affection of her he loved, and of ascertaining whether her regard was likely to increase or diminish by distance; and with this view, having arranged his affairs and bade adieu to all his friends, as if on the eve of a long voyage, he assumed his pilgrim's dress, and, to the surprise and grief of all his acquaintance, left the city.

When the unhappy maiden heard of his departure, she shed many tears, regretting that she had ever proposed so harsh and trying an alternative, and upbraided herself as the sole cause of every sinister event that might chance to follow, never having imagined it possible that he would venture upon so painful and hazardous a journey. And in this she reasoned well, for when Ippolito had pursued his way until about sunset, he abandoned the great road, and, striking into one of the thickest woods near at hand, he there deposited his pilgrim's mantle, cowl, and staff ; then retracing his steps in another dress, he entered, about the hour when the gates were closed, without observation into Siena. Proceeding direct to the abode of an old nurse, the only person whom he had admitted into his secret counsel, he there provided himself with everything requisite for his purpose.

Now, near the Church of San Lorenzo was a little country-seat, with a small orchard attached, belonging to Ippolito, both of which he had presented to his aged nurse, who, on her side, had always felt the same affection for him as for an only child. Next to this little tenement lay a spacious and beautiful garden, the property of the mother of the fair Gangenova, Ippolito's beloved mistress ; and here with her daughters she was often accustomed to take the air and enjoy the fragrance of the new-blown flowers. " Surely," thought the gentle and enamoured boy, " here at least we shall hardly be suspected ; nobody will believe me bold enough to seek her under her mother's very wing ; let us only find an opportunity of conversing with each other, and I cannot fail to discover some means of bringing our difficulties to a happy termination."

And solely for this object did he keep himself concealed, like a bird that shuns the eye of day, within the bounds of his little cottage ground, never venturing forth except late in the evening, when, scaling a lofty wall, he descended into the garden of his beloved Gangenova, and approached close under her chamber window. Up the side of this there chanced to flourish a lofty and lovely mulberry tree, one of whose spacious branches overshadowed the apartment in which she lay, and where her mother kept her, as being the youngest of her charges, constant company by night. Under its shade likewise Ippolito was wont to take his evening station, eager to avail himself of any opportunity of beholding or discovering himself to the object of his attachment.

In this way he was soon convinced that the sole chance he had of profiting by his situation was about the hour of sunrise, when he observed the fair girl appear on the balcony overlooking the garden, on which were placed a number of beautiful plants, interspersed with lilies and violets, from which she would cull some of the sweetest to deck her lovely breast and hair. There, too, he observed her amuse herself with a pretty linnet which had nested itself in the

noble tree, and which, won by her sweet encouragement, would hop in by the window and nestle in her bosom ; and it was then his delight to watch her thousand gentle looks and motions, and to imagine how delicious it would be to appropriate to himself the whole of those kisses and caresses. Often had he been on the point of accosting her, however great the risk, when her mother, her sisters, or some one in attendance, suddenly appearing, would dash all his hopes, and compel him to be doubly cautious, lest a discovery should be the cause of fresh restraints over his beloved.

He next resolved to avail himself of the assistance of his kind old nurse, who, under a variety of pretences, obtained admission into the mother's house, of which she took advantage to gain the ear of the young lady, and inform her of all that her lover had done for her sake ; of his passionate attachment and devotion, so well worthy a return, and his extreme desire of beholding her once more. Finding her equally delighted and surprised with what she had already heard, the nurse ventured to reveal to Gangenova the place of her Ippolito's concealment ; and the pleasure she experienced on finding that he was so near became almost too much for her to support.

" Has he not, indeed, deserted me then ? is he not really journeying far away, over seas, and in a foreign land, on my account ? Oh, dear nurse ! tell him that his image is engraven on my soul ; that I am too blest, too happy, and never more will give him reason to complain ! "

Upon hearing these words, the good old dame, thinking that she had happily succeeded in her mission, returned as fast as she could, in order not to forget the least portion of the message, which she well knew would carry such joy to the soul of the young lover.

Ippolito preserved the utmost caution in his proceedings, and it was not long before Fortune seemed to favour his wishes ; for keeping watch one evening very assiduously, he saw the arrival of a messenger bearing tidings that the wife of one of the old lady's brothers was taken suddenly ill, and entreated to see the mother of Gangenova without a moment's delay.

She was thus compelled to set out and leave her precious charge for one night, at least, to her own discretion ; and Ippolito believed that he had at length an opportunity of convincing himself of the reality of his beloved girl's affection for him, by inducing her to embrace the long-wished occasion, and to secure their happiness by flying together and uniting their fate in one. Fired with the hope, he hastened to his usual station underneath the mulberry tree that overspread her chamber window, and in order better to attract her attention, he shook some of its boughs, imagining that her beloved bird if nestling there would fly to her, and by its little cries and flutterings lead her to appear on the balcony. Not succeeding,

however, in this, he hastily ascended the tree, when soon the affrighted bird, flying with timid cries into some neighbouring shrubs, uttered such loud and sorrowful tones as to startle the gentle girl out of her slumber, who, fearing some sad accident had befallen it, hastily ran to the window. With a simple veil thrown over her neck and bosom, and her fine bright tresses carelessly yet gracefully arranged, she appeared in the eyes of her enchanted lover rather like a vision than a creature of mortal beauty, while a mingled look of anxiety and tenderness was impressed upon her countenance. Solicitous for the fate of her little companion, she cast her eyes eagerly on all sides, when, instead of her pretty linnet, the accents of Ippolito, eager to dissipate her alarm, met her ears.

The next moment she beheld him nearly at her side, and he succeeded almost in reaching her chamber window, while he attempted to prevent her crying out by addressing her in the lowest and sweetest tone :

“ Fear not, my gentle Gangenova ; it is your Ippolito who speaks ; fear not, either for yourself or your little favourite, for soon he will resume his blithesome notes, secure and happy as before. But mine, alas ! how different a fate, though far more fond, a thousand times more passionately devoted to you, serving you so long and faithfully ! Had you the heart, then, my sweetest, to think I was now taking my woeful pilgrimage far from thee, through remote and strange parts, perhaps gone upon my everlasting journey ? Oh, no, no ! I knew you had not, and I have been near you day and night ever since the period when I left my friends to go upon my feigned pilgrimage. For, alas ! when I cannot turn my thoughts from you for a moment, how could I wilfully bend my steps another way ? How could I find a moment’s repose till I had laid my wearied limbs and my burdened heart as near you as I could possibly venture without quite breaking upon your hallowed rest ? Hath not our poor nurse told you all I have done and suffered for your sake ; my lonely days and sorrowing yet delicious nights, passed amidst the scenes you have loved, among the very trees, and fruits, and flowers, where you have wandered ; nay, in these lofty and verdant branches that so richly and beautifully overshadow the sanctuary of my love ? Often have I seen you at the glimpse of dawn gathering flowers or caressing your bird, yet venturing not to intrude, afraid of calling down still further anger from your jealous guardians upon your innocent head. But my fond and unceasing vows have wearied Heaven at last : your mother is gone, and the hour arrived that is to repay us for a world of anxiety and dread, the fear of losing thee, and all that promised to make life sweet to me. Yet our time is precious, and I came to gather from thine own lips that thou dost indeed honour me with thy love ; that thou wilt

deign to receive my plighted vows and loyalty unto death. And this I would entreat in the name of all my anguish, all my fears for thee, by the horror of a rival's arms, and by thine own surpassing beauties, that amidst all our city's charms have alone succeeded in riveting my enchanted sight. Yet I know how all unworthy I am ; how much better and longer thou deservest to be sought ere won. Still thou knowest my whole life and bearing, though thou canst not form an idea of the sighs and tears I have poured for thee. Pity me, then ; and with pity let love and reason, let all the heavenly gifts you possess, plead in my favour, and induce you to receive me as your favoured and honoured lord."

Here he ceased, waiting with eager and trembling looks for a reply : while the beautiful Gangenova, overpowered on her side by a thousand wild and sweet emotions, was almost unable to articulate a word. Having descended into the balcony, on her sudden alarm, to recover her favourite bird, she had attempted on first hearing Ippolito's voice to fly ; yet surprise and terror chained her to the spot ; for having read the fabled metamorphoses of plants into mortals, and human beings into plants, on hearing a voice from the mulberry tree, her blood began to run cold, and her attempt to call out died away ere it passed her lips. Yet there was something in the tone that convinced her she need not fear, and gradually recovering her confidence, her heart seemed actually to swim in a tide of rapture before her noble lover had concluded his passionate appeal.

" Dear Ippolito," she at length replied, " it grieves me that we are so situated that it would be dangerous to tell all I have thought and felt since last we met and parted, much less the delight I have at finding you safe and near me once more. But, alas ! this is no place for you ; speed away, I beseech you, and think me neither hasty nor unkind, as indeed I esteem all your love and goodness to me as tenderly as I ought. But I fear for you, my kind Ippolito, and I entreat you to bid me one adieu, and let me see you safely depart."

At this moment, hearing a noise in the antechamber, and fearful lest her sisters should approach, Gangenova hastily drew back, while Ippolito, imagining that it proceeded from her room, and hearing a rustling noise continue for some time, was seized with sudden suspicions of some rival being harboured there, either by her sisters or the fair Gangenova herself. Maddened by this idea, he no longer remained master of himself, and in his attempt to reach her window from the tree so as to obtain a view of what was passing, such was the hurry of his spirits, that, missing his footing, he fell to the ground.

Startled at the terrific sound, the fair girl again rushed forward, bending as far as possible over the balcony, and calling on the name of Ippolito in a subdued and gentle tone ; but no longer did the sound reach his enraptured ear where he lay deprived of sense upon

the cold earth. Suspense and terror seized upon the heart of the tender girl when she received no answer ; love urged her to afford him her immediate assistance, while fear of discovery restrained her steps. Unable, however, longer to control her fears for his safety, she hastily descended into the garden by a back staircase rarely made use of, having remained from ancient times as a retreat in seasons of trouble, and having its outlet at the extreme part of the garden. And there, alas ! she found him stretched under the mulberry tree, lying cold and pallid, apparently deprived not only of sense but of life itself.

Almost as insensible as he, she threw herself at his side. Upon recovering her consciousness, showers of tears expressed the intensity of her sufferings ; her cries would have moved rocks and beasts of prey to pity, such were the piteous tones in which these words were uttered :

“ Sweet Heavens ! what dreadful thing hath happened ? What malignant star hath struck with death one of the best and noblest hearts that ever beat ? Oh, where is the soul that but now shone in thy face ? Wretch that I am, shall I never behold it more ? Art thou fled, for ever fled, sweet guardian of my honour, my love, and peace ? But what will betide them now when every tongue will be busy with my fame ? Whither shall I turn for help, reduced to such sad extremities as I now am ? ”

And while abandoned to her woe, the hapless girl thus poured her lamentations to the night, she never ceased her endeavours to restore the object of them by every means in her power, rubbing his heart and temples, joining his hands and lips to her own, and trying to breathe her soul into his. Finding that he yet gave no signs of life, she sweetly folded him in her arms and bathed his inanimate features with her tears. Ippolito's soul, just on the point of taking wing, seemed to welcome so much bliss ; and suddenly recovering his suspended powers, he heard the sweet words she uttered, and found himself alive in her arms. It was then he felt himself amply repaid for all the trials he had undergone, the sweetness and ecstasy of the reward far surpassing all he had been able to conceive, in breathing his vows thus closely into her ear. The moment before, she was about to transfix her breast with her lover's sword in a paroxysm of despair ; the next she found herself pressed to his breathing bosom, receiving, as it were, the gift of two lives restored to her at once.

For some time they both remained doubtful whether to believe that all was real, and gazed upon each other as if in a dream, until the fresh spirit of their joy being somewhat abated, they sat down by each other, side by side, with that serene and ineffable pleasure which the imagined certainty of their bliss inspired. But it was

destined, alas ! to be of short duration ; a voice was heard calling upon the name of Gangenova, gradually approaching nearer and nearer, so that they were compelled to part almost without bidding each other adieu. The poor girl hastened, trembling, by the same path that she had left the house : she fancied in the disorder of her spirits that she suddenly heard the terrific howlings of wild beasts, accompanied by the most dismal screams and cries ; and such was the impression they made upon her imagination, just after having taken leave of Ippolito, as to deprive her of the power of motion. It was long before she recovered even strength enough to regain her apartment, and with panting breast and dishevelled hair she threw herself upon the couch, still unable to banish the terrific ideas that haunted her imagination.

In the meanwhile, the sisters of Gangenova, being likewise freed from the superintendence of their mother, had been innocently enjoying themselves in their chamber, frequently calling the fair girl by her name to come and join in their diversion. Paying little heed to her silence, they continued for some time to amuse themselves with their games, until one of them, by way of adding a little novelty to the scene, crept forward in the dark intending to surprise her in her own room. Still receiving no reply, she ran for a light, and on returning found her sister stretched upon the bed, resembling rather a lifeless statue than a breathing human form. Calling her second sister in great alarm, they made eager inquiries into the cause of her agitation, feeling assured that something extraordinary must have happened.

The poor girl was equally unwilling and unable to reply, and her sisters, in some anxiety, despatched a messenger for their mother, who lost no time in returning to resume her maternal charge. With a little more authority, she insisted upon knowing the cause of her alarm, and upbraided her sisters severely for not keeping a more vigilant watch. Gangenova declared herself quite unable to account for the manner in which she had been affected, and the others professed equal ignorance as to the cause of her indisposition. In this dilemma her mother had recourse to the advice of the most expert physicians the city had to boast, which brought no alleviation, however, to her daughter's alarming symptoms, not one of them being able to discover that her illness was owing to some sudden surprise, while she, far more jealous of her fair fame than of her life, concealed from every one the real cause of her sufferings. Growing rapidly worse, she became extremely anxious to behold once more her beloved Ippolito, and recollecting the old nurse, she instantly sent for her, entreating that she would as soon as possible acquaint him with her situation, and find some means by which they might at least meet to take an eternal farewell.

Upon receiving these sad tidings, Ippolito grew deadly pale and trembled, though at the same moment he hastened to comply with her wishes. He assumed the dress of a poor traveller, with a false beard, so as to render it almost impossible to recognise him, and set out to beg alms at several houses adjacent to that of his beloved. As he approached the latter, the lady of the mansion herself made her appearance, half wild and distracted at the situation of her loveliest daughter. Informed of the occasion of her grief, the wily pilgrim, availing himself of the circumstance, bade her not despair, as the power of the Lord was infinite and His goodness equal to His power. Moreover, with His aid, he had himself become skilled in all the virtues of almost all the plants under the sun, and had devoted his knowledge of herbs and juices to the relief of his unhappy fellow-creatures, besides possessing secrets adapted to every species of disease.

The poor credulous old lady raised her hands to heaven in gratitude upon hearing such consolatory words, vowed that he had been peculiarly sent by Providence, and insisted that he should be instantly introduced to her unhappy girl. The moment Ippolito beheld her, he perceived that the tidings he had received were indeed too true. So much was he shocked, that he could with difficulty support his character; more particularly when he saw, from the brightening features of his beloved, that she instantly recognised him. Taking, then, the hand of the suffering girl within his own, as if to feel how fast her life-blood ebbed, he begged her attendants to stand apart while he proceeded to try his secret prayers and charms in his own way. Ippolito was thus enabled to learn the real source of her illness from her own lips. Beholding him with a mixture of tenderness and pity that added momentary lustre to her dying charms, she attempted, in those low soft tones he so much loved, to infuse balm into his wounded spirit. Painfully sensible of the extent of his loss, Ippolito from very grief was unable to utter a word, much less to ask the needful questions of his beloved. Wildly pressing his hand, she besought him never to forget the tender love he had borne her, and which she had seldom been happy enough to tell him how warmly and deeply she returned.

"For joyful, oh! very joyful, my Ippolito," she continued, "would my departure have been to me before now, had not solicitude for your fate detained me. As it is, I die content, nay, grateful, for two unexpected benefits: the one to have seen you thus, to hear you, and feel your hand in mine; and the other, to know that I lived and that I died beloved by my most noble and faithful-hearted Ippolito!"

It was now that the latter attempted to console and encourage her, declaring it would be his only pride to fulfil her wishes in the

minutest point ; but here his voice failing him through his fast-coming tears and sobs, he laid his aching head down by the side of his beloved's, and there remaining for a short time as he breathed forth a soul-distracting adieu, he raised it again painfully, passed his hand over his eyes, and looking his last look, left the apartment.

He then joined her weeping mother, and so far from holding out any hope, he said that pity for the sad and dying state in which he had found the poor patient had drawn scalding tears from his eyes. And he had not long been gone before the gentle spirit of his love, as if unable to continue longer without him, prepared to take wing, and in a few hours actually fled, as if to prepare in some happier scene a mansion of rest for their divided loves. For the wretched Ippolito, though able to bear up long enough to behold her beloved relics consigned to earth, had no sooner witnessed all the virtues and charms he had so fondly esteemed and loved for ever entombed in the vault of the Salimbeni, than, just as the ceremony was about to close, he fell dead at the foot of her marble monument. So strange and sudden an event threw the surrounding company, by whom it was regarded as little less than a miracle, into the utmost surprise and confusion, all of them believing that Ippolito Saracini was then on his way to the shrine of San Jacomo of Galicia. His unhappy parents, hearing of this his untimely end, hastened to join their tears with those of the mother of the beauteous Gangenova, by whose side the faithful Ippolito was laid.

GIOVAN-FRANCESCO STRAPAROLA, 16TH CENTURY

ANDRIGETTO THE IMPENITENT

IN Como, a little city of Lombardy not very far from Milan, there once dwelt a citizen of the name of Andrigetto da Sabbia, whose immense possessions, surpassing those of any other person, did not, however, prevent him from adding to them by every means in his power.

Being perfectly secure against the attacks of conscience in all his dealings, he was never known to suffer remorse for the most unjustifiable actions. He was in the habit of disposing of the produce of his large estates to the poorer citizens and peasantry, instead of selling it to merchants and others who could command ready money ; not from any charitable motives, but in order to obtain possession of their little remaining property, still uniting field after field to the great possessions he had already acquired.

It happened that so great a scarcity began to prevail in the city and its vicinity, that many persons actually perished of want, while numbers had recourse to our old usurer for assistance, to whom, from the urgent pressure of circumstances, they were compelled to make over, in return for the necessities of life, such interest as they might possess either in houses or lands. The concourse of people in his neighbourhood was so great as almost to resemble a jubilee or a public fair.

Now there was a certain notary, Tonisto Raspante by name, a most notorious and wily practitioner of his art, and more successful than any other of his brethren in emptying the pockets of the poor villagers. He had still, however, so much regard for an ancient law in Como relating to usurious contracts, which required the money lent to be counted in the presence of proper witnesses, as to refuse to draw up such instruments as Andrigetto often directed him to prepare, observing that they were altogether against the form of the statute, and he would not venture to risk the penalty. But such were the overbearing manners of the old miser, and so great was his authority in the city, that sometimes threatening him with ruin, and

at other times bribing him to his purpose, he compelled the attorney to obey his commands.

The time for confessing himself being at hand, before presenting himself at the confessional, Andrigetto took care to send to the priest an excellent dinner, with as much of the finest cloth as would make a pair of hose for himself and his servant, announcing at the same time his intention to confess on the ensuing day, when he thought that he was sure of meeting with a favourable hearing.

The priest undertook with pleasure the task of absolving from his sins so eminent and rich a citizen, and received his penitent with the utmost cordiality. Andrigetto fell on his knees before his spiritual father, accusing himself with very little ceremony of various sins and errors, not forgetting his usurious and illegal contracts, all which he recounted in the most minute manner. The priest, who had sense enough to perceive the enormous nature of his offences, conceiving himself bound to make some representations on the subject, ventured certain gentle hints on the impropriety of their repetition, and in the meanwhile strongly recommending restitution to the injured parties.

Instead of taking this in good part, Andrigetto turned very sharply round upon his confessor, observing that he was at a loss to understand what he meant, and that he had better go, and return no more until he had learned how to confess persons in a more rational manner. The priest, owing his preferment in a great measure to Andrigetto, and fearful lest he might lose his favour altogether, began to retract as well as he could, gave him absolution, and then imposing as slight a penance as possible, received a florin for his reward, after which Andrigetto took his leave in very excellent spirits.

Not long after this interview, our old usurer, while rejoicing in this absolution from all his sins, fell ill of a mortal distemper, and the physicians shortly despaired of his life. His friends and relatives having gathered round his bed, took the liberty of suggesting that it was now time to think of a sincere confession, to receive his last spiritual consolation, and make a final arrangement of his affairs, like a good Catholic and a Christian.

But the old gentleman, who had hitherto devoted all his thoughts and exertions, both day and night, to the hoarding of his wealth, instead of being at all impressed by the awfulness of his situation, only replied with great levity to their arguments, still amusing himself with arranging the most trifling concerns, and evincing not the least uneasiness at his approaching end. After long entreaties and persuasions, he was at last prevailed upon to comply with their request, and agreed to summon to his assistance his old agent, Tonisto Raspante the notary, and Father Neofito, his confessor.

On the arrival of these personages, they addressed the patient with a cheerful countenance, telling him to keep up his spirits, for that with God's help he would soon be a sound man again. Andrigetto only replied that he feared he was too far gone for that, and that he had perhaps better lose no time in first settling his worldly affairs and then arranging his ghostly concerns with his confessor. But the good priest, exhorting and comforting him to the best of his ability, advised him first of all to place his sole trust in the Lord, humbly submitting himself to His will, as the safest means of obtaining a restoration to health. To this, however, Andrigetto replied only by ordering seven respectable men to be called in as witnesses of his last will and testament.

These persons having been successively presented to the patient, and taken their seats, he proceeded to inquire from his friend Tonisto the very lowest charge which he was in the habit of making for penning a will.

"According to the strict rules of the profession," replied Tonisto, "it is only a florin; but in general the amount is decided by the feelings of the testator."

"Well, well, then," cried the patient, "take two florins, and set down what I tell you."

The notary having invoked the divine name, drew out the preliminaries in the usual manner, bequeathing the body of the testator to the earth and his soul to the hands of God who gave it, with humble thanks for the many favours vouchsafed by Him to His unworthy creature.

This exordium being read to Andrigetto, he flew into a violent rage, and commanded the notary to write down nothing but his own words, which he dictated as follows:

"I, Andrigetto da Sabbia, being of sound mind, though infirm of body, do hereby declare this to be my last will and testament: I give and bequeath my soul into the hands of the great Satan, the prince of devils."

Hearing these words, the witnesses stood aghast; Raspante's quill started from the paper, and, in evident horror and perturbation, he stopped. Looking the testator very earnestly in the face, he interposed:

"Ah! Messer Andrigetto, these are the words of a madman!"

"How!" exclaimed Andrigetto, in a violent passion, "what do you mean? How dare you stop? Write word for word as I direct you, and nothing more, or you shall never be paid for a will of mine: proceed, I tell you!"

Struck with the greatest horror and surprise, his friends attempted to remonstrate with him, lamenting that he should make use of language so opposite to his usual good sense, language which only mad-

men or blasphemers could be capable of using on such a subject and in so awful a situation as his.

"Desist, then," they continued, "for Heaven's sake, and consult your honour and the safety of your poor soul. Think of the scandal such a proceeding would bring upon your family, if you, who were esteemed so prudent and so wise, were to make yourself an example of all that is perfidious, ungrateful, and impious towards Heaven."

But Andrigetto paid no further attention to their reproaches than by observing that his business was with his attorney, and that as he had not yet finished his will, they had better take care what they were about ; on which there was soon a respectful silence throughout the room. He then turned towards his attorney, requesting to know, in a voice of suppressed passion, whether he was prepared to go on, as he had already offered to pay double the usual charge for his labours. Apprehensive that Andrigetto might expire before he had made a disposition of his property, the notary promised to do as he was required, more especially when he heard the patient beginning to hiccup with the violence of his emotions ; so that he was compelled to make a solemn vow to fulfil his client's instructions.

"Item," continued Andrigetto, "I hereby bequeath the wretched soul of my wicked agent, Tonisto Raspante, to the great Satan, in order that it may keep company with mine when it leaves this world, as it shortly must."

"The Lord have mercy on me !" cried the poor attorney, shocked at the deep solemnity with which these last words were uttered ; "the Lord have mercy on my soul !" and the pen dropped from his hand. "Recall," he continued, "my honoured patron, recall those wicked words ; do anything but destroy my eternal interests, my last, my dearest hopes "

"Go on, you rogue !" cried the testator, "and do not venture to interrupt me again ; do not tell me about your soul. You have your pay, and that is enough ; so proceed quickly as I shall direct you. I leave my said attorney's soul to the devil, for this reason, that if he had not consented to draw up so many false and usurious contracts, but had driven me from his presence as soon as I proposed them, I should not now find myself reduced to the sad extremity of leaving both our souls to the king of hell, owing entirely to his shameful cupidity and want of common honesty."

The attorney, though trembling at the name of the king of hell, yet fearful lest his patron might enter into further particulars far from creditable to him, wrote as he was commanded.

"Item," continued the patient, "I bequeath the soul of Father Neofito, my confessor, into the claws of Lucifer ; aye, to thirty thousand pair of devils."

"Stop, Messer Andrigetto, pray stop," cried the priest ; "and do

not think of applying those dreadful words to me. You ought to put your trust in the Lord, in the Lord Jesus, whose mercies always abound, who came to save sinners, and is still inviting them, night and day, to repentance. He died for our sins, and for your sins, Messer Andrigetto ; you have only to beseech pardon, and all will yet be well. The road is still open to restitution ; hasten to make restitution then ; for the Lord does not wish the death of a sinner. You have great wealth ; remember the Church ; you will have masses said for your soul, and may yet sit in the seats of paradise."

"Oh, thou wicked and most wretched priest !" retorted the patient, "by thy vile avarice and simony thou hast helped thine own soul, as well as mine, into the pit of perdition. And dost thou now think of advising me to repent ? Confusion on thy villainy ! Write, notary, that I bequeath his soul to the very centre of the place of torments ; for had it not been for his bold and shameless conduct in absolving me from my numerous and repeated offences, I should not now find myself in the strange predicament in which I am placed. What ! does the rogue think it would be now just to restore my evilgotten gains, and thus leave my poor family destitute ? No, no ; I am not quite such a fool as to do that ; so please to go on. Item, To my dear lady Felicia I leave my pretty farm, situated in the district of Comacchio, in order to supply herself with the elegancies of life, and occasionally treat her lovers as she has been hitherto in the habit of doing, thus preparing the way further to oblige me with her company in the other world, sharing with us the torments of eternity. The remainder of my property, as well personal as real, with all future interest and proceeds accruing thereon, I leave to my two legitimate and beloved sons, Commodo and Torquato, on condition that they give nothing for a single mass to be said for the soul of the deceased, but that they feast, swear, game, and fight, to the best of their ability, in order that they may the sooner waste their substance so wickedly acquired, until, driven to despair, they may as speedily as possible hang themselves. And this I declare to be my last will and testament, as witness all present, not forgetting my attorney."

Having signed this instrument and put his seal to it, Andrigetto turned away his face, and uttering a terrific howl, finally surrendered his impenitent soul to Pluto.

ORTENSIO LANDO
16TH CENTURY

THE ASTROLOGER AND THE ASS

THERE was once a gentleman of Verona, named Messer Ugo da Santa Sofia, who devoted himself with such assiduity to the study of the arts and sciences, and especially to the contemplation of the heavenly bodies, that he had become famous throughout the whole country.

Whether planets, or fixed or wandering stars, fiery comets, satellites, or lunar orbs, he boasted the most intimate acquaintance with all their motions, and foretold their revolutions in heaven without the risk which he incurred when he ventured to prophesy respecting those which should happen on earth. He foretold the death of King Robert and the succession of a female to the throne. The confines of Hungary, he predicted, were to extend even as far as Greece, and would afterwards reach the plain of Troy ; and he smelt the approach of that horrid pestilence which committed such dreadful devastations in the memorable year 1348. But suffice it to observe that the accuracy of his predictions was such, that his reputation spread through Europe, and none of its Princes ever found themselves in difficulty without sending for Messer Ugo to enjoy the advantage of his sage admonitions. We must not be surprised, therefore, to hear that he became a little vain of these his unearthly powers, which, in his own opinion, were altogether infallible.

Now it so fell out that one day during harvest-time he went to his country-house, for he took great pleasure in seeing the corn threshed in the barn, when one of his neighbours, an ancient villager, very well off in the world, called upon him to communicate what he considered to be rather important information at that season of the year. Being somewhat lame in one of his legs, he was in the habit of riding a beautiful ass, from which he now alighted at the door of Messer Ugo.

"I have called upon you, as I was riding by, just to tell you, Messer Ugo, that I think it would be prudent in you to take care of your

corn, which has been cut so long, during this threatening weather ; for within an hour hence we shall have such a tremendous storm, that you will imagine the very heavens are about to tumble upon our heads."

Our philosopher, with great coolness, inquired how his neighbour alone came to be in possession of this secret, and after gazing round the horizon on all sides, unable to detect the least black spot, which frequently portends the distant storm, he turned a look of quiet contempt upon the good countryman, observing :

"The sky is quite clear, the sun mild, and not even a cloud upon the mountains, and yet you are bold enough to prognosticate a storm. Why, there is a soft south wind blowing, and the sun is in the right sign and the right degree ; nothing less than a miracle can make it rain. Nature herself could not make it rain now. With the help of Providence, to be sure, she might ; but, as she stands disposed at present, it is impossible we can have any rain."

He continued to debate the point with the countryman for a long while without making the least impression upon him ; the only answer he received was, that Messer Ugo would be much better employed in giving orders to have his grain quickly housed than in wasting arguments upon him, as the approaching tempest would not merely destroy the corn, but beat down trees, scatter herds and flocks, and shake the houses to their foundations.

Messer Ugo's choler now rose to such a height at the countryman's strange pertinacity, that he was much inclined to bestow upon him a box on the ear ; but instead of this, he so far controlled his indignation as first to consult his telescope and compasses, with which he once more examined the heavens more narrowly than before, yet still drawing the same conclusion, that rain for that day, at least, was quite out of the question, expecting as soon to see the mountains levelled with the plains or the rivers flowing over the hills. ✕

Finding that he could be of no use, the villager at length took his leave, and he had scarcely dismounted at home before a dark speck became visible in the horizon, and swelling with the rising wind, in a short time obscured the face of the sun itself. Strong lightnings soon afterwards began to play towards the north, while the wind changing gradually into the east, floods of rain, resembling water-spouts rather than a common shower, emptied themselves into the bosom of the west, already torn by the rising conflict of the elements. As the torrents of rain increased, the reverberating thunders and the vivid lights, instead of dying away, seemed to gather double strength in an almost unheard-of manner, such as we may suppose pealed over the heads of the fierce Titans when, rising in rash revolt, they experienced the indignation of their father Jove. Towers and steeples tottered to their base, the loftiest oaks lay prostrate, the river Adige

rose and burst its old embankments, while the proudest palaces with their royal inmates trembled, as if anticipating the dissolution of the groaning fabric of the world.

But where was poor Messer Ugo with his famous astrological observations during this time, and where was all his unhoarded grain? It was an equally severe blow upon his property and his pride; he almost wished he had never become versed in a knowledge of the stars, since he found himself thus shamefully imposed upon by the weather. His fine corn was flying all abroad, a prey to the fierce elements, and he sorely repented him of having turned a deaf ear to his neighbour, whose precaution would have so well availed him. Away he flung his square and compasses, his astrolabe, and his whole apparatus, in the rage of the moment, while he watched the wild progress of the storm, every moment appearing an age until it should have so far subsided as to permit him to creep with safety to his honest neighbour, to entreat his pardon and to inquire by what art he had foretold this dreadful tempest in the midst of a perfect calm.

At length, with some difficulty, during a pause of the awful blast, he contrived to reach his door; and after apologising to him in a meek and faltering tone, he besought him to explain in what way he could possibly have foreseen such a calamity.

"There is certainly," he continued, "some superior master in the same art as my own, whom you must have applied to on this occasion."

"That is very true, Messer Ugo," replied the villager; "I have consulted him, and he is no other than the pretty animal upon which you saw me mounted. My own ass unfolded the secret to me, as he has done many others of the same nature before. He can tell fair weather too, as well as foul; and I never in my life was in need of any other weather-glass: he takes a more exact survey of the heavens than the best glass or compass could possibly do. I always remark that when the weather is going to be extremely rough, he sets up his back, his hairs stand on end, and he hides his tail between his legs, shaking as if he were in an ague. But if we are merely going to have a moderate breeze, it is quite another thing, for then he only holds his tail between his legs for a few moments, lashing his sides; and if no thunder and lightning follow, he will scarcely do so much. But when we are to be visited with such a fierce tempest as we have had to-day, then you should mind what he says; he never in all his life gave me such an awful warning before. For he first directed all his ears and eyes as it were up into the sky; he stopped and listened; and then he leaped up, and beat the earth with his four feet as if all the horse-flies in the world had been devouring him.

"So I thought I would just step and tell you our opinion upon the subject, for my noble beast and I are always perfectly of one accord

on this point. Nor should you, with all your vast stores of learning, Messer Ugo, be surprised at this ; for how is it that the cock informs us so exactly of the hour, as if he had got a little piece of watch-work in his head ? How is it in the least more strange than what we hear of the dolphins gambolling before the luckless vessels, with their curved backs upon the surface, warning the poor sailors of the tempest at hand ? Why should not my ass be supposed to know something likewise upon the subject ? ”

Messer Ugo da Santa Sofia had not a word to utter in reply ; he had now fairly the worst of the argument, and at length candidly confessed his admiration of the superior tact and foresight of the ass, grieving, however, at the same time, that the long-eared steed of Carabotto (the name of the good villager) should be, after all, a greater astrologer than himself, who had actually grown grey in the service of the stars, the tides, and the causes of everything which happens here below. He entreated his good neighbour to keep the matter secret, at least for a while, lest his reputation should suffer in the opinion of the world.

The countryman very kindly promised that he would do so, but whether he really did or not is uncertain, as the affair quickly took wind, though most probably from some witnesses who must have been present at the controversy previous to the storm. Certain it is that the whole country was speedily in possession of the secret, and of much amusement in consequence, it being everywhere said that the ass of Carabotto had turned out at last a greater astrologer than the great Messer Ugo da Santa Sofia di Verona himself.

The saying became at length quite proverbial, and nothing was more common than to hear a man answer a very pertinacious enemy by observing : “ Yes, I daresay you think you know more astrology than Carabotto’s ass ” ; which generally brought another reply much as follows : “ Go, go ! for you know less than poor Messer Ugo da Santa Sofia himself.”

When our unhappy astronomer learned that the matter was publicly divulged throughout all Lombardy, he went into such a violent fit of passion, that he actually seized and committed to the flames more than two thousand crowns’ worth of astrological books and instruments ; quadrants, spheres, and nativities all fell a prey to the fiery element ; and he used even to walk with his eyes fixed upon the ground to avoid contemplating the heavens, which, after all his long labours, had so egregiously deceived him.

ORTENSIO LANDO

EVIL FOR EVIL

RICCARDO CAPPONI, a noble Florentine, having devoted himself in early life to trade, in the course of time realised a very handsome property. When advanced in years, he took his son, Vincenti, into partnership, and not long after gave his whole business into his hands; and falling into a bad state of health, owing either to his great exertions or to his subsequent high living, he became unable to leave the house.

His son, Vincenti, who was of an extremely avaricious disposition, finding his father continued to linger much beyond the period his covetous and ungrateful heart would have assigned him, and unwilling longer to support him, took measures, under pretence of obtaining for him better medical advice than he could at home provide, to have him conveyed to the city hospital. Yet his affairs were then in a flourishing state, and everything he possessed he owed to his unhappy parent, whose age and infirmities, whose tears and entreaties, he alike disregarded. This unnatural son could not, however, contrive to conduct the matter so secretly as to elude the observation and the reproaches of all classes of people in the city. He at first tried to impose, both upon his friends and the public, by the false representations that he set on foot; but finding these could not avail him, he resolved, in order better to disarm the popular voice against him, to send his own children with little presents to their grandfather.

On one occasion he gave to his eldest boy, about six years of age, two fine cambric shirts, desiring him, early the next morning, to take them carefully to his poor grandfather in the hospital. The little boy, with an expression of great respect and tenderness in his countenance, promised that he would do so; and on his return the next day, his father, calling him into his presence, inquired whether he had delivered them safe into the hands of his grandfather.

"I only gave him one, father," replied the little boy.

"What!" exclaimed Vincenti with an angry voice; "did I not tell you both were for your grandfather?"

"Yes," returned the little fellow with a steady and undaunted look, "but I thought that I would keep one of them for you, father,

against the time when I shall have to send you, I hope, to the hospital."

"How!" exclaimed Vincenti, "would you ever have the cruelty to send me there, my boy?"

"Why not?" retorted the lad; "let him that does evil expect evil in return. For you know, you made your own father go there, old and ailing as he is, and he never did you any harm in his life, and do you think I shall not send you when I am able? Indeed, father, I am resolved that I will; for, as I have said before, let him that does evil expect evil in return."

On hearing these words, Vincenti, giving signs of the utmost emotion, as if suddenly smitten by the hand of Heaven, sorely repented of the heinous offence against humanity and justice that he had committed. He hastened himself to the hospital; he entreated his father's pardon on his knees, and had him conveyed instantly home, ever afterwards showing himself a gentle and obedient son, and frequently administering to his aged parent's wants with his own hands.

This incident gave rise through all Tuscany to the well-known proverb above mentioned, "Let him that does evil expect evil in return"; and from Tuscany it passed into many other parts of Italy.

COUNT CARLO GOZZI

1722-1806

THE GRAPE STEALERS

As more lucky adepts than any lady in the art of thieving, I shall proceed to give an account of three very accomplished geniuses in their way, namely, Carlo Foschino, Girolamo Petrani, and Menico Cedola, belonging to the city of ——. And perhaps, as the scene of action did not lie in a church, and the spoils were but of inconsiderable value, Heaven permitted the rogues to make their escape, otherwise they would have been placed in an awkward predicament, and might have found the grapes they plucked uncommonly sour, and such as would effectually have disgusted them with the fingering art in future.

It happened to be a year of great scarcity, and more especially in the province of O——, insomuch that the villagers died of hunger, while the grain and vines of every kind looked as if they had been ridden over by troops of horse, affording such a prospect as nearly drove the farmers and their landlords distracted. A fine time indeed for those who had nothing to do but eat the fruits of others! So that the owners were compelled to keep watch day and night, though the harvest was hardly worth the pains.

More for whim than want, Carlo Foschino agreed with his companions to make an attack on one of the vineyards, celebrated for the sweetness of its grapes, at Santo Martino di ———, which is situated at a short distance from the city, intending not only to eat as much as they liked, but to fill a good basket or two for future use. With this view each of them took his pannier under his arm, and sallying forth about midnight, they arrived at the land of promise, into which they cautiously entered. When once fairly in possession, they proceeded to clear the ground before them in great style, whispering one another at intervals.

“How good they are!”

“Yes, so sweet! what a flavour! quite exquisite! It is a real paradise for us hapless mortals”; and thus feasting and applauding, they did great execution, sweeping everything before them in order to get at fresh bunches, until they were fairly weary and in danger of suffocation.

Then, drawing their well-sharpened knives, they began afresh the work of destruction, filling their panniers with all the expedition in their power. They were proceeding merrily through a fine plantation, having finished the better half of their task, but could not avoid making a rustling noise with the branches and scattering a few leaves ; and the night being so still that a nest of ants at work would have been heard, this was enough to rouse the jealousy of three armed myrmidons on watch, who, like men of war, were scouring those coasts, to give all freebooters a warm reception with their great rusty blunderbusses and enormous slugs, in any shape but round.

Hearing a noise of the crashing of branches, one of the watchmen discharged his piece in that direction, while a sudden rush was made, and a cry set up enough to shake the soul of a hero.

"Thieves ! thieves ! that way ! leap the ditch ! shoot, kill them ! oh, that is good, by San Bellino !"

Yet Heaven willed that the shot should miss its aim ; and the wily robbers, not forgetting their panniers, started off at the sounds of vengeance they heard, using their utmost efforts to escape along a narrow path. The night was dark, and they often stumbled over the stalks of the vine or of the Indian corn growing in the field, though without paying attention to the circumstance, the entangling and tearing and trampling of leaves giving them little chance of escape from their fierce pursuers, whose threatening cries sounded nearer and nearer, till they imagined they felt themselves run through the body.

In this extremity Petrani whispered in a soft voice as he continued running :

"My friends, let us throw our panniers away and have a chance for our lives !"

To this Cedola replied, hardly able to draw his breath :

"You say well ; let them go."

"No, no," cried Foschino ; "take heart, brothers, and leave the matter to me !"

So forthwith he began to bellow as loud as he could :

"Mercy upon me ! that last shot has pierced me through ; I am dying, though I did not feel it before ; my blood is spouting out like new wine from the barrel !—Confirm what I say, you blockheads, and make your escape."

Then Cedola began to cry, "Mercy, mercy upon us ! try to get a little farther ; the wound is perhaps not mortal, and we will fetch you a surgeon."

"No," replied the wily Foschino, in a dying voice, the better to keep up the cheat, "it is all over with me. Those cruel rascals have murdered a poor Christian for eating a bunch of grapes ; yet, by the

Holy Virgin, they will have to swing for it, that is some consolation !”

And thus saying, they proceeded with flying colours, their panniers heaped up with grapes. For the stupid watchmen, imagining all they heard to be true, began to consider the matter and take more time.

“ Do you hear what he says ? ” cried one.

“ That I do,” cried the second.

“ And you, do you hear ? ” they added to the third, one of the oldest cut-throats in all Italy.

“ Let them take it, by all the saints, it is very well ; they will obey the seventh commandment in future I will go nearer, for I daresay they must have left loads of grapes behind them, the wretches ! ” and they proceeded more cautiously in pursuit.

Foschino hearing footsteps stealing along, afraid of discovery, and at the same time of losing the grapes and receiving a good bastinado from the watchmen, resolved, as he felt himself quite wearied out, to go no further.

“ Leave me here to die, dear friends I am only grieved that there is no priest at hand to confess me, but Heaven’s will be done ! Fly, save yourselves ! Remember me to my poor wife and children, and perform my last wish ! ”

During this time the foolish watchmen were listening, as he continued to add, “ Be witness that I leave my wife all I have, in trust for the benefit of our children after her, in equal portions ; be kind to her and to them, and assist them to bring my body away to-morrow that I may receive Christian burial, and persuade my friends to offer up a few alms and masses for my poor soul. I feel that I am going now, and do you go too ! ”

The rustics hearing these sad words, stopped, and now began to hold a colloquy upon this unlucky case ; while Cedola and Petrani set up the most horrid lamentations, wringing their hands and sobbing as if their hearts would break.

“ Nay, do not give way to despair. A plague upon the watchmen ! they will hang for it ; and upon the grapes ! we may indeed call them sour. Well, we have the comfort to think that the watchmen will be hanged if you die ; they were only to take us into custody, not to take our lives. There never was such a piece of barbarity, such a wilful murder, since the world began. See how he bleeds, poor fellow ! he will not live long. Come, let them even kill us all, since they have killed our best friend, a gentleman who only joined us for a frolic. Let the wretches dip their hands in the blood of us all ; but we are men of quality, and they shall smart for it.”

Upon hearing these words and cries so boldly uttered, the guards concluded it to be a serious affair, and being really afraid that they

had killed the gentleman, began to think of running in their turn. But when they next heard him say, in a feeble and lamentable voice, "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum,*" they could no longer control their fright, but took to their heels, just as they heard the others utter, "He is dead, he is gone for ever ; cold cold, my friend !" and a fresh ululation was set up, which added wings to the flight of the men.

This done, they departed at their leisure, the dead man leading the way with the panniers. When the watch ventured to stop, one of them said, "Who shot him, think you ? It was not I, I am sure."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"Well, but," said another, "you agreed that I should fire."

"True, but you should have shot over his head and not through his body."

"Well," replied the man, "I thought I did shoot high up into the air. I wonder how it could have killed him"; and thus, each speaking in his own defence, full of fear and trembling, they returned home, but were unable to sleep a wink that night ; while the three knaves, having recovered from their terror, were enjoying themselves comfortably over their panniers of grapes.

In the morning the thieves gave an account of their adventure, which threw their auditors into such fits of laughter that some have not ceased even to this day. As for the poor rustics, although they never found the corpse, or had any charge brought against them, they yet continued uneasy and suspicious, having the fear of the gallows perpetually before their eyes, and not having courage to make any inquiries into the affair, lest they should betray themselves, and raise suspicions that they had been guilty of so wicked a homicide.

GIOVANNI BOTTARI
17TH CENTURY

THE MONK AND THE WOMAN

IN the time of St. Jerome, one of the most learned doctors of Holy Church, there dwelt in Maronia, a village not far from the city of Antioch, a poor man, who supported himself upon the produce of a little farm which he cultivated with his own hands. He had an only son, of the name of Malco, whom he supported, as well as his wife, in pretty easy circumstances ; this child being the sole pledge of their affection, and, from his pleasing and excellent disposition, the delight of both his parents. Having attained to years of maturity, their favourite object was now to behold him married ; and with this view his father one day thus affectionately addressed him :

“ As you know, my dear son, that you have neither brother nor sister, and are now arrived at manhood, while your parents are fast verging to old age, it would much gratify us both could we see you united according to your wishes in wedlock. As the consolation of our declining years, we shall thus be delighted to witness your happiness, bringing up your children, the sweetest solace of this our mortal state, in the fear of the Lord ; whereas, should you defer such an engagement to a later period, you will encounter infinitely more risks and trouble, as may be learned from numerous examples which it were needless to specify.”

After listening attentively to the kind advice offered by his father, Malco, with the greatest respect and reverence, begged to decline his proposal, alleging as a reason that he wished to devote himself wholly to a religious life—a resolution which gave equal surprise and concern to both his parents. They therefore gently reproached him for indulging wishes that involved the failure of their name, dying without any legitimate successors, of whom all men are more or less desirous ; and urged besides a variety of other reasons, which were applied with as little success. All they could gather from him was, that upon mature deliberation he had resolved to provide only for

the good of his soul, to the exclusion of all earthly considerations. In spite of all their tears and entreaties they could obtain only the same answer, and their threats proved as unavailing as their prayers.

Both parties persisting in their respective resolutions, to their mutual annoyance, Malco, in order to avoid its perpetual recurrence, as well as to execute the object he had in view, resolved to abandon his native place, which he took an early opportunity of doing. But not venturing to depart into the East from a dread of encountering the contending armies of the Romans and Persians, then engaged in cruel and sanguinary warfare, he took a secret route towards the desert of Calcis, and, after a few days of patient toil, he found himself amidst its vast solitude, relieved only by a solitary monastery which he discovered in the distance, where, the holy brotherhood receiving him on his arrival, he resolved to submit himself to their most rigid rules and discipline.

Joyfully assuming the monk's habit, he soon began to set an example to the whole fraternity, by the severity of his mortifications, his continual fasts and watches, which had shortly the effect of consuming all the vigour and freshness of his youth, along with his natural appetities, which he completely subdued by confining himself to the very scanty fare earned by his own hands.

Having continued this mode of life for some years, he accidentally heard of his father's decease, and feeling for the situation of his widowed mother, as well as being desirous of securing his little heritage, which he wished to convert into money as alms for the poorer brethren and other charitable purposes, he shortly came to the resolution of returning home. Going accordingly to the abbot, he entreated his permission to depart, at the same time bidding him a holy farewell. The good father, grown grey in experience and wisdom, was sore displeased to hear of his poor monk's intention, and pronounced it to be nothing better than a temptation of the devil, presented in this specious shape of charity the more surely to beguile his soul; affirming that his only chance was to resist the ancient adversary in the outset, in default of which so many wise and holy men, even the fathers themselves, had oftentimes been deceived; and that the more pious and excellent the object he had in view appeared to be, the more wily and diabolical was the plan laid for his spiritual destruction. This the holy father laboured to make manifest by many notable instances and examples; but all in vain to deter the good monk, who was obstinately bent upon returning home.

For, though the eloquence of his superior appeared like the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it had not the effect of shaking his resolution a jot, not even when his kind benefactor had recourse to prayers and entreaties, and charged him with the greatest ingrati-

tude in thus turning his back upon the monastery and the poor brethren, who had so hospitably received and sheltered him. He would, moreover, bring into peril both soul and body, and provoke his eternal perdition, by wilfully traversing a country lying between Baria and Edessa, beset with heathen robbers and spoilers, who delighted to shed the blood of the innocent worshippers of the true faith.

"Besides," added the good father, appealing to the highest authority, "no man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven; and if he persist in this line of conduct, like the dog returning to his vomit, he will soon become the lost sheep of the fold, exposed to all the fury of ravenous wolves."

Malco, nevertheless, being by no means of a soft and yielding disposition, was neither to be persuaded nor terrified out of his purpose; and embracing the worthy abbot, who consigned him over to speedy destruction, he boldly set forth upon his route, heedless of the entreaties of the whole brotherhood. As a precaution against the Moors, he united himself to a body of travellers about to proceed in the same direction, who agreed to support and defend one another.

The caravan consisted of about sixty souls, men and women, of various ranks, and their courage was speedily put to the test; for they had hardly proceeded a day's journey, when they were suddenly assailed by a band of infidels, who sprang upon them in vast numbers from an ambush, crying, "Death, death to the unbelieving dogs!" at the same moment seizing their knives, and rapidly executing their threats. Great indeed was the outcry, the consternation, and confusion; some flying, some perishing, and some glad to be made prisoners.

Upon a division of booty after the tragedy, it happened that our friend Malco, along with a young woman, fell to the lot of one master, who, mounting his prisoners upon the same camel, took his way over a long and barren waste, beyond a vast river, during which they encountered infinite toil and trouble. And when they at length attained their destination, amidst some fertile solitudes in the heart of the desert, the poor monk was set to guard his heathen master's flocks, transformed into a shepherd boy; but possessing uninterrupted time and solitude, he soon became reconciled to his situation and quite contented, believing himself now better entitled to the character of a monk than he had ever before been; a monk, in the Greek tongue, signifying nothing more nor less than a recluse.

It thus became delightful to him to dwell upon the lives of the holy patriarchs, as described in the Old Testament, which it was his great ambition to emulate as nearly as possible, having merely dreamed or read of them in his convent, but never flattering himself

that he should have the happiness so nearly to resemble them. Adding to this consideration the dangers through which he had passed, he had good reason to feel satisfied with his condition, and offer up thanks to Heaven for his preservation in hymns and psalms, which he could repeat extempore in great number.

Too happy had he been could he have continued in this tranquil state, had Fortune been so inclined ; but she was busily preparing new trials for him, while he imagined himself beyond the reach of her malice in the deep sequestered solitudes he so much enjoyed. For his master, becoming sensible of his faithful and assiduous services in the care and increase of his flocks, felt more kindly disposed towards him, and desirous of rewarding his poor slave in a manner which he thought at once agreeable and profitable. With this view, summoning his female slave into his presence, he addressed the pious Malco as follows :

" I am so well satisfied, Malco, with your conduct, that I am resolved to give you some signal proof of my favour, insomuch that if you had before a motive for promoting my interests, it will render you in future doubly assiduous. Behold, I am willing to give you this fair Christian here for your wedded wife ; you are fellow-prisoners, and I cannot do better than unite your fortunes in one, so that you may henceforward, though condemned to servitude, pass your days in peace and comfort in the joys of domestic life."

The poor monk was sadly grieved and disconcerted at this proposal, the worst in his opinion that he had to dread. He instantaneously declared his dislike to it, adding that he was prohibited by the rules of his order even from indulging such a wish ; and, besides, the lady in question had a husband most likely living, taken prisoner at the same time with themselves, though disposed of to a different master. Incensed at receiving the least opposition on the part of his slave, his master, giving way to an impulse of passion, suddenly drew his knife for the purpose of despatching Malco on the spot.

And this he would infallibly have done, had not his pious herdsman sought refuge behind the slighted lady, whom he was glad enough in this exigence to embrace ; and his dread was such that he became unable to utter a word, which his savage master luckily took for an acknowledgment of his error and an inclination to submit. Concluding such to be the case, he ordered both parties to be conducted home to Malco's hut, where they were safely secured for the night. In this great extremity the unfortunate monk stationed himself as far as possible from the hated object of his fears, considering her in the light of his spiritual adversary, whom he was to resist by every means in his power. He appeared to regard her with mingled scorn and detestation, which the fair Christian on her part returned ; and, buried in their own thoughts, they sorrowfully con-

trasted their late freedom and happiness with their present miserable lot. Such, indeed, was its impression upon the spirits of the pious Malco, that added to his dread of being compelled sooner or later to violate his vows, he resolved to make an end of all his troubles at a single blow. With more of the hero than the Christian, he was already seen brandishing the fatal steel, and after muttering a few hasty prayers, he turned to his companion.

"Fear me not," he said, "unhappy woman ; but fare you well. I am going to rid myself of this world, preferring to lose my life rather than to preserve it by entering into the marriage state."

Hearing his desperate intentions, and observing the deadly weapon glaring through the darkness that surrounded them, the kind lady seized the despairing man in her arms, and holding him as straitly as she could, she at the same time conjured him to have mercy on his own soul, and then falling at his feet, she thus continued :

"Nay, slay not thyself, my good Malco ; but take heed, lest, in attempting to save thy soul alive, thou dost not by those very means contrive to lose it. If it be only a wish to preserve thy long-treasured virtue that tempts thee to such despair, pray let thy mind be easy on that score ; for, believe me, I will sooner consent to be cut into pieces than sin against that commandment of God which thou well wottest of, being determined to preserve my conjugal faith at all hazards. So listen to me, and be at peace ; for I will teach thee how to arrange thy affairs as well as my own in such sort as to leave us both at liberty to pursue our respective inclinations without incurring the tremendous vengeance of our lord and master. Let us affect submission to his wishes, while we continue to live with the affection only of brother and sister for each other, and in this way our misfortunes ought to render us dear to one another."

Such a proposal Malco received with gratitude, and they contrived to deport themselves so tenderly and affectionately one towards the other as completely to impose upon their master, who, pleased with this proof of their submission, every day granted more and more liberty to their actions. Some years elapsed in this manner without either of them having occasion to accuse the other of a wish to infringe upon the original conditions, their master indulging only a little surprise at not being sooner presented with a young progeny of slaves. But the pious brother, as well as his sister in captivity, becoming weary of the privations they endured, one day as our hero was standing in a desponding attitude alone in the desert, leaning upon his crook and gazing wistfully upon the sky (and little else, indeed, there was to be seen), he began to ponder seriously upon his past life. Surrounded by his flock, he dwelt upon his present lot as contrasted with the pleasant life he had before

led with those holy monks by whom he had been so kindly educated and cherished. The figure of his venerable abbot appeared in all the odour of sanctity before him, and there were moments when his charitable acts and converse came fresh over his memory, seeming to say that he had wilfully forfeited the salvation which he would have secured to him, besides plunging his saintly director in holy grief for his premature departure.

While revolving these bitter thoughts, he chanced to cast his eyes on an anthill, where he observed thousands of little busy citizens labouring up and down the hill with all their might. Sometimes they marched in rank and file, as if conducting some important operations; some were pioneers, while others were employed in bearing provisions needful to the pigmy citadel. Another party was seen erecting earthen batteries against the wintry winds and floods, a second was busily biting off the heads of grains and seeds in order to prevent vegetation; and a third was seen, like pall-bearers, with the dead bodies of their brethren upon their shoulders, without in the least incommoding the proceedings of the others. More extraordinary still, such as were observed to be overburdened received immediate succour from a company in reserve, who speedily gave their shoulders to the task. And as the whole process appeared to be conducted according to certain rules and method, those that entered were seen as if inquiring the business of such as were going out, for the purpose of ascertaining their respective duties.

Poor Malco's thoughts began to dwell upon the delights of freedom and industry, as he contemplated the sight before him; slavery appeared to him in all its naked deformity, and he sighed once more for the arduous duties of a monastic life, of which he fancied he beheld so laudable an example in the busy scene before him. Upon returning to his rustic abode, he proceeded to address his female companion as follows, who expressed no little surprise at the sudden change which had taken place in his sentiments:

"I will tell you of what I have been thinking, and I hope it will meet with your approbation: I have an earnest desire to obtain my freedom."

"So have I," returned his companion; "I am heartily weary of the severe and solitary life we lead here, and I am very much concerned to see your affliction. For this reason I would prevail upon you to seize the first occasion that offers of attempting our escape, as I will gladly run all risks in accompanying you."

This was mutually agreed upon by both parties, who had now only to study the best means of achieving so desirable an object. And it was not long before Malco, turning to the lady, said, "Are you still in the same way of thinking, and do you feel courage enough to avail yourself of such an opportunity as we were lately speaking

of, should it speedily offer ? ”

“ Yes, indeed I do,” was her reply.

“ That is quite essential,” continued Malco, “ for if you indulge the least fear, it will necessarily involve us in greater troubles than ever. So listen while I explain all the particulars of the plan I have adopted ” ; and this he proceeded to do, after which he lost no time in making all the preparations he considered necessary.

In the first place, he slaughtered two of the largest goats he could find in his master's flock, whose skins he converted into leather bottles, cooking the flesh so as best to preserve it for provisions upon their route. All being in readiness, they took a favourable opportunity towards nightfall of leaving their master, following the course of the adjacent river for about ten miles, over a toilsome and dangerous way. There Malco inflated his leather bottles, and boldly placing himself upon one of them, he let himself float in the direction of the current, inviting his companion to follow his example, which, with the utmost intrepidity, she did.

In this manner were they borne a long way down the river, until they found an opportunity of landing upon the opposite side, and flattered themselves that they should thus succeed in avoiding pursuit, as their master would be unable to track them beyond the banks of the river. Although they had the misfortune to lose the chief part of their stores during their passage, they pursued their way, allowing scarcely any time for refreshment or for rest, and dreading to look either behind or before them, lest they should behold the relentless features of their incensed master, or of robbers still more ferocious. The next day the heat of the sun was so excessive as to compel them to proceed for the most part by night, when they were infested with a variety of noxious insects, birds, snakes, and animals.

On the third day of their weary pilgrimage, while journeying between hope and despair, and at times stealing anxious looks around them, they heard footsteps hastily approaching, which from their direction they judged to be in pursuit. The form of their master seeming to rise before them, added wings to their flight ; and such was the terror he inspired, that, losing all their presence of mind, they no longer knew the path they took, but eagerly looked out on all sides for some place of refuge. At the moment they found their pursuers fast gaining upon them, they perceived an immense cave not far from them, on the right hand, into which they rushed with the boldness of despair. But before they had entered very far, a fresh cause of alarm arose, even greater than the former : they discovered it to be in possession of poisonous reptiles and savage beasts, whose growlings were heard resounding in the distance. For such wild and deeply concealed caverns are eagerly

resorted to during the hot and fiery season by the most ferocious animals, on account of their comparative coolness.

Affrighted at the appalling noises around them, the fugitives, venturing to advance no farther, hid themselves in a little recess on one side of the passage, and sunk almost lifeless upon the ground. In the meanwhile, their master and his attendant, for indeed it was no other, had approached the entrance of the cave, tracking the footsteps of their victims through the sand. Dismounting from their camels, the master ordered his servant to enter with his drawn sword, while he stood with a large knife at the mouth of the cavern, prepared to give them no agreeable reception. Now it so happened that the attendant, advancing in the obscurity of the place, passed by the recess where Malco and his companion lay. Impelled forward by the threats of his master, he began in his turn to call out with a loud voice, in order to affright the fugitives from their hiding-place, and penetrated into the more remote parts of the cavern, exclaiming :

"Vile wretches and slaves as you are, do you hear your master's voice ? Come forth, I say, and receive the just chastisement of your crimes ! come out, and see what sort of a reception he will give you."

He had hardly pronounced these words, that made the vaults of the cave echo back the sound, when, approaching the lair of a fierce and terrific lioness, she suddenly sprang upon the wretched slave, and, fastening upon his throat, bore him, howling, into the remotest recesses of that dismal place. His master, after awaiting his return, or the appearance of the fugitives, during a long period in vain, began to fear that his faithful slave had been overpowered by the other two, and, without reflecting longer upon the matter, he rushed forward, brandishing his huge knife, and shouting out his name, into the cave. At the same time he used the most opprobrious epithets towards his fugitive slaves, who lay trembling with dread upon the ground ; but he had not proceeded far beyond their hiding-place, when the same ferocious lioness that had just despatched his servant stood before his path. Before he could move a single step, he felt her talons at his throat, and in the next instant lay a corpse at her feet. The furious animal, supposing her retreat had been discovered, then rushed out of the cavern, bearing her cubs in her teeth, and, without returning to feast upon the dead bodies of the master and his slave, sought out for herself another lair.

During the whole time that this fearful tragedy was transacting, Malco and his companion had remained still as death, witnessing, at the same time, every circumstance as it occurred, while their hearts beat fearfully at the tremendous threats of the master and his servant as they were seen brandishing their weapons, and at the sudden and dreadful appearance and the howlings of the lioness,

which made their very hair to stand on end.

Often was the wretched woman on the point of giving utterance to her fears, had not Malco restrained her ; and when they believed the danger to be passed, they were scarcely less affected than before, and offered up thanks to Heaven for their deliverance, which they continued until the evening, not venturing sooner out of their hiding-place. They then mounted the camels of the deceased, which they found supplied with provisions and wine, and recovering their spirits sufficiently to continue their journey, arrived amidst hymns of praise and gratitude about nightfall at the outposts of the Roman army.

An account of their long sufferings and adventures being conveyed to the tribune, he gave them a gracious hearing, and allowed them an escort as far as Mesopotamia, where they were recommended to the charge of the proconsul Labino. There, hearing of the decease of his worthy benefactor the abbot, Malco continued his journey into Maronia, along with the companion who had shared so many troubles with him, devoting himself wherever he came to the service of Heaven and the Church, and preserving his virtue free from the contamination of worldly vanities.

MICHELE COLOMBO
18TH CENTURY

FRIAR TIMOTHY AND THE WOODMAN

IN one of the districts of Montferrat dwelt a poor labourer, whose name was Gilbert. For the support of himself and family he cultivated a small enclosure, and whatever time he could snatch from the labours of his little farm he employed in gathering faggots from a wood which was at no great distance. These he brought home on the back of an ass, of which he was become the master, and afterwards, as opportunity served, conveyed them to the market of the next town, where, with the money they produced, he purchased such articles as were most wanted by his family. Gilbert was a simple fellow, and so credulous that you might have made him believe almost any absurdity.

It happened one day that, wishing to penetrate into the interior of the wood, he left his ass tied to a tree at the outskirts. Soon afterwards there passed that way two minor brethren of Saint Francis; Father Antony of Como, and Father Timothy of Casal Maggiore. Of missal or of breviary Father Timothy took little heed; he was one of those who, not yet on familiar terms with his alphabet, had attached himself to that holy order with no other aim than that of being useful in its most ordinary concerns. In company with Father Antony he rambled over the circumjacent districts, begging, for Christian charity's sake, contributions of bread, wine, fruit, and whatever else could be obtained for the maintenance and solace of the poor brotherhood.

Yet was there not one among them of quicker and acuter invention than he; a brain more fantastical it is impossible to imagine; and his most whimsical tricks were accomplished with such pleasantry and good humour, that he was the admiration of his associates.

Now these two friars having had a tedious tramp through roads somewhat muddy, and bending their course homewards with their bags well filled, were so fatigued that it was with great difficulty they

could set one foot before the other ; yet had they a good distance to travel ere they could reach their monastery. Accordingly, Father Timothy, observing that the ass was there unguarded, and considering it to be unreasonable that an animal made to carry burthens should stand there fresh and idle, while they, tired and breathless, bore on their shoulders no trifling weight, made up his mind without hesitation. Turning round to his companion, he asked with a smile :

" Brother Antony, what would you give if you could have this ass to carry our bags ? "

" Verily," answered the other, " so nearly am I exhausted, that just now it would suit me well."

" And do not you see," rejoined Timothy, " that it is Providence that has guided us to this beast ? Let us not reject the boon that is thus opportunely thrown in our way."

With these words, approaching the animal, he threw his wallet on its back, and invited his companion to do the same ; then loosing the halter from the ass's head, he fitted it upon his own, and proceeded to fasten himself to the tree, exactly in the position in which they had found the animal.

Next, turning to Father Antony, " Go," said he, " my good brother ; lead this beast back with thee to the convent, and there tell our brethren that I, suddenly attacked by fever, have found refuge in the house of a benevolent peasant, who, for the more expeditious conveyance of our collection of bread to the convent, has charitably lent thee this ass, which we may return to him next week, when, in quest of provisions, or for any other purpose, we may be coming this way. As for me, say that, please God, I hope to be with them in the course of to-morrow."

Hearing a proposal so extraordinary, Antony doubted if he were awake, and, used as he was to the whimsicalities of Timothy, yet this freak appeared to him so extravagant that he began to suspect his poor brother was really crazed, and fixing his eyes upon him with a stupid stare, stood motionless and mute.

" Away ! " cried Timothy, half angry ; " lose no time ; a moment's delay may defeat our purpose ; leave me to take care of myself, and this halter may chance not to gall my neck so grievously as you perhaps suspect. Have I not, Antony, shown you more than one sample of what I can accomplish ? Confide implicitly in me ; do what I desire, or you will repent it ; gone ! "

This he spoke in a tone so decisive and imperative, that Antony submitted, and replied, " Since so you command, so I will do ; look you to the consequences " ; and forthwith, driving the loaded beast before him, he punctually obeyed the directions his comrade had given.

The holy brotherhood, when they heard of the accident which had

befallen Father Timothy, concluded that, since Providence orders all for the best, they must seek consolation for their brother's mischance in a pious reliance upon the Divine mercy, and in the meantime be thankful that Timothy's good host should have been disposed to despatch to them with so much provident expedition their supply of bread.

Gilbert, having at length gathered and bundled together his faggots, hastened from the wood to place them on the back of his ass; and seeing who it was that stood in the animal's place, exclaimed, "Lord, have mercy on us!" then crossed himself with trembling astonishment, and fearing that this was nothing less than a malicious trick played him by the devil, was about to run away. Recollecting, however, that the Evil One would be little inclined to assume the figure of a holy Franciscan, he somewhat checked his terror, but without any diminution of his stupor and amazement.

When Timothy observed his surprise and confusion, he could with difficulty refrain from laughing; but yet recollecting himself and composing his countenance, he thus addressed him:

"Thou art amazed, my friend, and truly not without reason, at that which thou beholdest; but what then will be thy astonishment when thou shalt learn the remainder of my story? Approach without dread; for thyself have no apprehension; but admire, in my case, the powerful hand and mysterious judgments of Heaven! It was thy belief that thou hadst an ass in thy stable, whilst, under the figure of that animal, thou wert harbouring there an unfortunate Franciscan, no other than myself!"

"Can you be serious, good father?" said Gilbert, interrupting him.

"Did I not tell thee," quickly rejoined the friar, "that this thy astonishment would be redoubled by my narration? Free me, I pray thee, from this disgraceful halter, the only vestige now left of my ignominy. Think not, oh, my son!" (continued Timothy when the rope was removed from his neck), "think not that, however sanctified be the life which a mortal leads here below, he therefore becomes sinless! So frail is humanity, so many the occasions of offence, and so strong and frequent the temptations that assail us, that it is a hard thing for a man to escape; he may resolve to fly from the world and to hide himself from its allurements, yet he carries still about him his carnal appetites, those treacherous enemies of his peace. What wonder, then, if occasionally he should yield to seduction, although dwelling in the sacred asylum of piety? Even I, I myself, had the ill fortune to fall, and my sins were of that nature and degree, that it pleased the Divine justice, by way of punishment, to transform me into a vile beast of burden, in order that in its shape I might undergo the penance I too well had merited.

In this most wretched condition, so severe, as well thou knowest, have been the sufferings I have endured, that it has pleased God at length, in His compassion, to raise me from my degradation, and to restore me to the dignity of the human form."

Gilbert, who gave entire faith to the friar's story, recollecting all that he had made the poor ass endure, was filled with sorrowful contrition, and throwing himself upon his knees before the friar, cried in a supplicating tone :

"And can you, my good father, ever forgive me the blows, innumerable as they have been, which you have had from my hands, and the curses, moreover, which you have so often heard from my lips ? Atrocious indeed do they now appear to me, since great is my veneration for your holy order, and for your pious founder, St. Francis ! "

"Let not these recollections afflict thee," said Timothy, affectionately raising him from the ground ; "for heaping as thou didst thy blows upon my back and sides, thou gavest to my flesh that salutary castigation which it was Heaven's will it should sustain ; rebellious as it had too often proved, it was but right that it should suffer the punishment needful to bring it back into the path of duty. Nay, I will tell thee, that in this instance thou hast rendered me no inconsiderable service ; for the more frequent and heavy were the blows of thy cudgel, the more speedily was by that means my sum of penance accomplished and the period of my deliverance accelerated. Far, therefore, from owing thee any grudge on that score, I ought to thank thee for it ; and I give thee my word, that when once reseated in my cell, as I propose shortly to be, I will be mindful of thee, and put up for thy benefit prayers so fervent, that although just now thou appearest to suffer by the loss of thine ass, thou shalt, in ample recompense, receive manifold blessings poured down upon thy family, and upon the joyful harvest of thy fields. Take, then, my worthy friend, with a grateful heart, thy wood upon thy shoulder ; go, and may peace attend thee ! "

"But will not you, my good father," replied Gilbert, "abide with us this night ? You shall want no accommodation which our cottage can afford ; the hour, you see, is waxing late, and should rather suggest to you the thought of seeking for yourself a lodging than of adventuring on the high-road."

"Son, thou hast said well," answered the friar ; "but what must be my confusion on revisiting the spot where I have dwelt in such disgrace ! However, since to endure the survey of the scene of my humiliation may count for a becoming act of resignation, I submit, and with God's permission will follow wherever thou shalt direct."

So saying, they proceeded to the house, and when arrived there, Father Timothy pretended to be on terms of intimacy with all the

family. He began to talk with great familiarity, first with one, then with another, as if they had been old acquaintances ; and when at this they one and all began to express surprise, he, in a joking way, said he wondered at their estrangement towards one who had for a long period been their guest. Gilbert, too, assured them that such was literally the fact ; and after keeping them awhile in suspense, informed them who this fellow of a friar was, and under what shape he had lived with them so long.

An aged man, Gilbert's father, a young woman, his wife, and two lads, his sons, whose age did not exceed twelve or fourteen, composed this simple group. Open-mouthed, half breathless, and with eyes fixed in motionless attention, each of them listened to Gilbert's story ; in their countenances you might have read a mixture of surprise, devotion, and gladness, not without marks of regret and compassion caused by a recollection of the long labours that the poor ass had sustained, the scanty nourishment of bad straw, worse hay, or vile garden weeds which at any time had reached his manger, and the many bastinadoes or goads with which every one of them had often galled or bruised him. In pity for his sufferings past, they strove with each other who should now caress him most, and show him the fondest regards. Two pullets, all that remained in the coop, were forthwith put to death, and by their help, together with whatever else the cottage could muster or the neighbourhood contribute, a repast was prepared ; to which a bottle of excellent wine, long hoarded by Gilbert, but which this evening it was his pleasure to uncork in honour of his guest, gave a relish.

Now, while the dishes and the cups went round, Father Timothy, naturally sociable and gay, indulged his mirthful vein to a degree that delighted them all, displaying from time to time some of his most original drolleries ; not forgetting, however, occasionally to recall his laughing circle to a more serious mood by introducing, in the midst of his facetious stories, some moral or religious precept, that he might appear to them as devout as they found him jovial and entertaining. Yet he could not so far command himself as not to awaken in the mind of Gilbert some little suspicion ; and this was principally occasioned by the notice which the friar took of Gilbert's wife, Dame Cicely, who was comely and well favoured for her station, and whom he eyed with glances that seemed to betoken how gladly he would, if he could, be on terms of greater intimacy with her.

She, on her part, with that veneration for the good brethren of the Church which belongs to her sex, and attracted, moreover, by his pleasant manners and conversation, could hardly look upon him with indifference. Of this the watchful husband was more than once aware ; and when at last he could no longer contain himself, thus addressed the friar :

"My good father, one may easily see how necessary to you is the mortification of the flesh ; even after the little indulgence that you have given to it this evening, it displays symptoms of rebellion and threatens you with a relapse into sin. If so recent an escape from your past sufferings prove thus unavailing to defend you from assaults of this nature, grieved am I to tell you that great is your danger of again assuming (aye, and very shortly too) an asinine form ; let me therefore advise you to return betimes to-morrow morning to your convent ; there stay, and bastinado your carcase without ceasing, unless you prefer that a service so necessary should be performed for you by others."

It is wonderful to observe how, at times, a man's passions have the power of quickening his understanding. Gilbert, who, in all his life before had never uttered a sentence which was above the common style of a labouring peasant, now that his slumbering intelligence was roused by the stimulating impulse of anxious jealousy, became all at once a fluent and able speaker. In consequence of an address so cogent and unexpected, the friar was aware that it became him to be upon his guard, and, by words and actions well considered and adapted, to steer clear of a flagellation of the flesh, which during the remainder of the evening he was careful to do.

Next morning, after a hasty breakfast, Timothy returned to his convent, and told the father guardian that it was for the benefit of the monastery that it had pleased Heaven to visit him with fever ; for that the good peasant, prompted by devotion towards the venerable St. Francis, had presented to the convent that useful animal which he had lent the preceding day to Friar Antony, intelligence which at first greatly rejoiced the worthy guardian ; but he subsequently reflecting that it might appear to the world inconsistent with the mendicant life of the brotherhood and with the strictness of their rules to maintain an ass, as if it were from indolence or self-indulgence ; that hence might ensue some diminution in the charity of the faithful, and some abatement of fervent and zealous regard towards his order, prudently determined that it would be best to sell the ass, without the aid of which the brethren had hitherto gone on very well, and he therefore sent it forthwith, by a trusty person, to a neighbouring fair.

There, as chance would have it, that very day was Gilbert, who, as soon as he descried the ass, knew him from the circumstance of his having one of his ears cropped ; and going up to him, he placed his mouth close to the animal's ear in the action of talking to him, and whispered very softly :

"Lack-a-day, my good father ! the rebellious flesh, then, has played thee another trick ! Did I not forewarn thee that this would happen ? "

The ass, feeling a breathing and tickling in his ear, shook his head, as if not assenting.

"Deny it not," resumed Gilbert, "I know thee well; thou art the self-same."

Again the ass shook his head.

"Nay, deny it not; lie not!" rejoined the worthy Gilbert, somewhat raising his voice; "lie not, for that is a great sin; thee it is: yes, in spite of thyself, it is thee!"

The bystanders seeing a man thus holding a conversation with an ass, believed him crazy, and, gathering round him, began to put questions, some about one thing, some about another, and Gilbert advanced the strangest and most unaccountable facts, always maintaining that this was not an ass, however it might bear that resemblance, but in truth a poor miserable Franciscan, who, for his carnal frailties, was now unfortunately a second time transmuted into this form; and he then told from the beginning all the story of the incontinent friar metamorphosed into a beast of burthen. The bursts of laughter which attended this narrative it is needless to describe.

Poor Gilbert was all that day the butt of the fair; and as the owl draws after her a flight of birds, which flutter around her with various screams and chatterings, so was Gilbert, whichever way he turned, pressed upon by the surrounding crowd, who, with loud jeers and scoffs, made him their laughing-stock. At last some one among them recommended to him again to buy this unlucky animal, to feed him with the best hay he could procure, and by all kinds of good treatment to make him amends for what he had in times past caused him to suffer. This advice pleased Gilbert, who purchased the ass, and led him home. How was Dame Cicely astonished, how also the old father and the two youngsters, to see their well-known ass again!

Such was the welcome they gave him, such the attentions they paid him, that never was ass in the world so fed or so caressed. Plump beyond the costume of asses became his flesh; smooth and shining like velvet his skin; but the perverse animal soon grew vicious and prone to bad habits; already he began to give no little trouble, not to the old man, the wife, and the boys only, but even to Gilbert himself. With savage bites and rude kicks he assailed his generous benefactors, and brayed so loudly and so continually night and day that he became a very serious nuisance to the neighbourhood. He more than once broke the halter by which he was tied to the manger in order to satisfy his unruly appetite. How sadly scandalised all the family were at these brutal practices of Friar Timothy it is easy to imagine. Blamable as might seem to them all his former pranks, and unbecoming, as they doubtless were, in that probationary state to which he was condemned, they were pecca-

dilloes compared with his last offence.

Gilbert, finding that day by day he became more intractable, concluded that, persevering as he did in a life thus vicious and depraved, he was condemned never more to fraternise with his Franciscan brethren. He began to suspect, too, that he himself might be in some measure to blame for what had happened.

"Asinine flesh and monkish flesh," said he to himself, "must not be too indulgently treated."

Gilbert saw the necessity there was for returning in good earnest to that system of flagellation which had on a former occasion produced so beneficial an effect. With this view he again had recourse to the cudgel and to hard labour; but whether it was that the unlucky ass had by a course of gentle treatment become of a constitution too delicate, or whether Gilbert, with an over-ardent zeal, carried his regimen of severity beyond the due limits, certain it is that the afflicted beast, unable to endure a discipline so rigid, soon died, and these good people had to deplore the eternal loss of the soul of Father Timothy, who, in spite of his having undergone two purgatories in an ass's shape, still died impenitent through the execrable vice of gluttony, from which may the Divine grace preserve all good Christians, not excepting the poor brethren of St. Francis!

ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

1839—

IT SNOWS

THE thermometer marks barely one degree above freezing, the sky is covered with ominous white clouds, the air is harsh and piercing, what can induce Signor Odoardo, at nine o'clock on such a morning, to stand in his study window? It is true that Signor Odoardo is a vigorous man, in the prime of life, but it is never wise to tempt Providence by needlessly risking one's health. But stay—I begin to think that I have found a clue to his conduct. Opposite Signor Odoardo's window is the window of the Signora Evelina, and Signora Evelina has the same tastes as Signor Odoardo. She too is taking the air, leaning against the window-sill in her dressing-gown, her fair curls falling upon her forehead and tossed back every now and then by a pretty movement of her head. The street is so narrow that it is easy to talk across from one side to the other, but in such weather as this the only two windows that stand open are those of Signora Evelina and Signor Odoardo.

There is no denying the fact: Signora Evelina, who within the last few weeks has taken up her abode across the way, is a very fascinating little widow. Her hair is of spun gold, her skin of milk and roses, her little turned-up nose, though assuredly not Grecian, is much more attractive than if it were; she has the most dazzling teeth in the most kissable mouth; her eyes are transparent as a cloudless sky. and—well, she knows how to use them. Nor is this the sum total of her charms: look at the soft, graceful curves of her agile, well-proportioned figure; look at her little hands and feet! After all, one can hardly wonder that Signor Odoardo runs the risk of catching his death of cold, instead of closing the window and warming himself at the stove which roars so cheerfully within. It is rather at Signora Evelina that I wonder; for, though Signor Odoardo is not an ill-looking man, he is close upon forty, while she is but twenty-four. So young, and already a widow—poor Signora Evelina! It is true that she has great strength of character; but six months have elapsed since her husband's death, and she is resigned to it already, though the deceased left her barely enough to

keep body and soul together. Happily Signora Evelina is not encumbered with a family ; she is alone and independent, and with those eyes, that hair, that little upturned nose, she ought to have no difficulty in finding a second husband. In fact, there is no harm in admitting that Signora Evelina has contemplated the possibility of a second marriage, and that if the would-be bridegroom is not in his first youth—why, she is prepared to make the best of it. In this connection it is perhaps not uninteresting to note that Signor Odoardo is in comfortable circumstances, and is himself a widower. What a coincidence !

Well, then, why don't they marry—that being the customary *dénouement* in such cases ?

Why don't they marry ? Well—Signor Odoardo is still undecided. If there had been any hope of a love-affair I fear that his indecision would have vanished long ago. *Errare humanum est*. But Signora Evelina is a woman of serious views ; she is in search of a husband, not of a flirtation. Signora Evelina is a person of great determination ; she knows how to turn other people's heads without letting her own be moved a jot. Signora Evelina is deep ; deep enough, surely, to gain her point. If Signor Odoardo flutters about her much longer he will singe his wings, things cannot go on in this way. Signor Odoardo's visits are too frequent ; and now, in addition, there are the conversations from the window. It is time for a decisive step to be taken, and Signor Odoardo is afraid that he may find himself taking the step before he is prepared to : this very day, perhaps, when he goes to call on the widow.

The door of Signor Odoardo's study is directly opposite the window in which he is standing, and the opening of this door is therefore made known to him by a violent draught.

As he turns a sweet voice says :

" Good-bye, papa dear ; I'm going to school."

" Good-bye, Doretta," he answers, stooping to kiss a pretty little maid of eight or nine ; and at the same instant Signora Evelina calls out from over the way :

" Good-morning, Doretta ! "

Doretta, who had made a little grimace on discovering her papa in conversation with his pretty neighbour, makes another as she hears herself greeted, and mutters reluctantly, " Good-morning."

Then, with her little basket on her arm, she turns slowly away to join the maid-servant who is waiting for her in the hall.

" I am so fond of that child," sighs Signora Evelina, with the sweetest inflexion in her voice, " but she doesn't like me at all ! "

" What an absurd idea ! . . . Doretta is a very self-willed child."

Thus Signor Odoardo ; but in his heart of hearts he too is convinced that his little daughter has no fondness for Signora Evelina.

Meanwhile, the cold is growing more intense, and every now and then a flake of snow spins around upon the wind. Short of wishing to be frozen stiff, there is nothing for it but to shut the window.

"It snows," says Signora Evelina, glancing upward.

"Oh, it was sure to come."

"Well—I must go and look after my household. *Au revoir*—shall I see you later?"

"I hope to have the pleasure—"

"*Au revoir*, then."

Signora Evelina closes the window, nods and smiles once more through the pane, and disappears.

Signor Odoardo turns back to his study, and perceiving how cold it has grown, throws some wood on the fire, and, kneeling before the door of the stove, tries to blow the embers into a blaze. The flames leap up with a merry noise, sending bright flashes along the walls of the room.

Outside, the flakes continue to descend at intervals. Perhaps, after all, it is not going to be a snowstorm.

Signor Odoardo paces up and down the room, with bent head and hands thrust in his pockets. He is disturbed, profoundly disturbed. He feels that he has reached a crisis in his life; that in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, his future will be decided. Is he seriously in love with Signora Evelina? How long has he known her? Will she be sweet and good like *the other*? Will she know how to be a mother to Doretta?

There is a sound of steps in the hall; Signor Odoardo pauses in the middle of the room. The door reopens, and Doretta rushes up to her father, her cheeks flushed, her hood falling over her forehead, her warm coat buttoned up to her chin, her hands thrust into her muff.

"It is snowing and the teacher has sent us home."

She tosses off her hood and coat and goes up to the stove.

"There is a good fire, but the room is cold," she exclaims.

As a matter of fact, the window having stood open for half an hour, the thermometer indicates but fifty degrees.

"Papa," Doretta goes on, "I want to stay with you all day long to-day."

"And suppose your poor daddy has affairs of his own to attend to?"

"No, no, you must give them up for to-day."

And Doretta, without waiting for an answer, runs to fetch her books, her doll, and her work. The books are spread out on the desk, the doll is comfortably seated on the sofa, and the work is laid out upon a low stool.

"Ah," she cries, with an air of importance, "what a mercy that

there is no school to-day ! I shall have time to go over my lesson Oh, look how it snows ! ”

It snows indeed. First a white powder, fine but thick, and whirled in circles by the wind, beats with a dry metallic sound against the window-panes ; then the wind drops, and the flakes, growing larger, descend silently, monotonously, incessantly. The snow covers the streets like a downy carpet, spreads itself like a sheet over the roofs, fills up the cracks in the walls, heaps itself upon the window-sills, envelops the iron window-bars, and hangs in festoons from the gutters and eaves.

Out of doors it must be as cold as ever, but the room is growing rapidly warmer, and Doretta, climbing on a chair, has the satisfaction of announcing that the mercury has risen eleven degrees.

“ Yes, dear,” her father replies, “ and the clock is striking eleven too. Run and tell them to get breakfast ready.”

Doretta runs off obediently, but reappears in a moment.

“ Daddy, daddy, what do you suppose has happened ? The dining-room stove won’t draw, and the room is all full of smoke ! ”

“ Then let us breakfast here, child.”

This excellent suggestion is joy to the soul of Doretta, who hastens to carry the news to the kitchen, and then, in a series of journeys back and forth from the dining-room to the study, transports with her own hands the knives, forks, plates, tablecloth, and napkins, and, with the man-servant’s aid, lays them out upon one of her papa’s tables. How merry she is ! How completely the cloud has vanished that darkened her brow a few hours earlier ! And how well she acquits herself of her household duties !

Signor Odoardo, watching her with a sense of satisfaction, cannot resist exclaiming : “ Bravo, Doretta ! ”

Doretta is undeniably the very image of her mother. She too was just such an excellent housekeeper, a model of order, of neatness, of propriety. And she was pretty, like Doretta, even though she did not possess the fair hair and captivating eyes of Signor Evelina.

The man-servant who brings in the breakfast is accompanied by a newcomer, the cat Melanio, who is always present at Doretta’s meals. The cat Melanio is old ; he has known Doretta ever since she was born, and he honours her with his protection. Every morning he mews at her door, as though to inquire if she has slept well ; every evening he keeps her company until it is time for her to go to bed. Whenever she goes out he speeds her with a gentle purr ; whenever he hears her come in he hurries to meet her and rubs himself against her legs. In the morning, and at the midday meal, when she takes it at home, he sits beside her chair and silently waits for the scraps from her plate. The cat Melanio, however, is not in the habit of visiting Signor Odoardo’s study, and shows a certain surprise at

finding himself there. Signor Odoardo, for his part, receives his new guest with some diffidence ; but Doretta, intervening in Melanio's favour, undertakes to answer for his good conduct.

It is long since Doretta has eaten with so much appetite. When she has finished her breakfast, she clears the table as deftly and promptly as she had laid it, and in a few moments Signor Odoardo's study has resumed its wonted appearance. Only the cat Melanio remains, comfortably established by the stove, on the understanding that he is to be left there as long as he is not troublesome.

The continual coming and going has made the room grow colder. The mercury has dropped perceptibly, and Doretta, to make it rise again, empties nearly the whole wood-basket into the stove.

How it snows, how it snows ! No longer in detached flakes, but as though an openwork white cloth were continuously unrolled before one's eyes. Signor Odoardo begins to think that it will be impossible for him to call on Signora Evelina. True, it is only a step, but he would sink into the snow up to his knees. After all, it is only twelve o'clock. It may stop snowing later.

Doretta is struck by a luminous thought :

" What if I were to answer grandmamma's letter ? "

In another moment Doretta is seated at her father's desk, in his arm-chair, two cushions raising her to the requisite height, her legs dangling into space, the pen suspended in her hand, and her eyes fixed upon a sheet of ruled paper, containing thus far but two words : *Dear Grandmamma*.

Signor Odoardo, leaning against the stove, watches his daughter with a smile.

It appears that at last Doretta has discovered a way of beginning her letter, for she replunges the pen into the inkstand, lowers her hand to the sheet of paper, wrinkles her forehead and sticks out her tongue.

After several minutes of assiduous toil she raises her head and asks " What shall I say to grandmamma about her invitation to go and spend a few weeks with her ? "

" Tell her that you can't go now, but that she may expect you in the spring. "

" With you, papa ? "

" With me, yes, " Signor Odoardo answers mechanically.

Yet if, in the meantime, he engages himself to Signora Evelina, this visit to his mother-in-law will become rather an awkward business.

" There—I've finished ! " Doretta cries with an air of triumph.

But the cry is succeeded by another, half of anguish, half of rage.

" What's the matter now ? "

" A blot ! "

"Let me see ? . . . You little goose, what *have* you done ? . . . You've ruined the letter now !"

Doretta, having endeavoured to remove the ink-spot by licking it, has torn the paper.

"Oh dear, I shall have to copy it out now," she says in a mortified tone.

"You can copy it this evening. Bring it here, and let me look at it. . . . Not bad,—not bad at all. A few letters to be added, and a few to be taken out ; but, on the whole, for a chit of your size, it's fairly creditable. Good girl !"

Doretta rests upon her laurels, playing with her doll Nini. She dresses Nini in her best gown, and takes her to call on the cat, Melanio.

The cat, Melanio, who is dozing with half-open eyes, is somewhat bored by these attentions. Raising himself on his four paws, he arches his flexible body, and then rolls himself up into a ball, turning his back upon his visitor.

"Dear me, Melanio is not very polite to-day," says Doretta, escorting the doll back to the sofa. "But you mustn't be offended ; he's very seldom impolite. I think it must be the weather ; doesn't the weather make you sleepy too, Nini ? . . . Come, let's take a nap ; go by-bye, baby, go by-bye."

Nini sleeps. Her head rests upon a cushion, her little rag and horse-hair body is wrapped in a woollen coverlet, her lids are closed ; for Nini raises or lowers her lids according to the position of her body.

Signor Odoardo looks at the clock and then glances out of the window. It is two o'clock and the snow is still falling.

Doretta is struck by another idea.

"Daddy, see if I know my La Fontaine fable : *Le corbeau et le renard*."

"Very well, let's hear it," Signor Odoardo assents, taking the open book from the little girl's hands.

Doretta begins :

*"Maître corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage ;
Maître . . . maître . . . maître . . ."*

"Go on."

"*Maître . . .*"

"*Maître renard*."

"Oh, yes, now I remember :

*"Maître renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage :
Hé ! bonjour . . ."*

At this point Doretta, seeing that her father is not listening to her, breaks off her recitation. Signor Odoardo has, in fact, closed the book upon his forefinger, and is looking elsewhere.

"Well, Doretta," he absently inquires, "why don't you go on?"

"I'm not going to say any more of it," she answers sullenly.

"Why, you cross-patch! What's the matter?"

The little girl, who had been seated on a low stool, has risen to her feet and now sees why her papa has not been attending to her. The snow is falling less thickly, and the fair head of Signora Evelina has appeared behind the window-panes over the way.

Brave little woman! She has actually opened the window, and is clearing the snow off the sill with a fire-shovel. Her eyes meet Signor Odoardo's; she smiles and shakes her head, as though to say: What hateful weather!

He would be an ill-mannered boor who should not feel impelled to say a word to the dauntless Signora Evelina. Signor Odoardo, who is not an ill-mannered boor, yields to the temptation of opening the window for a moment.

"Bravo, Signora Evelina! I see you are not afraid of the snow."

"Oh, Signor Odoardo, what fiendish weather! . . . But, if I am not mistaken, that is Doretta with you. . . . How do you do, Doretta?"

"Doretta, come here and say how do you do to the lady."

"No, no—let her be, let her be! Children catch cold so easily—you had better shut the window. I suppose there is no hope of seeing you to-day?"

"Look at the condition of the streets!"

"Oh, you men . . . you men! . . . *The stronger sex* . . . but no matter. *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir.*"

The two windows are closed simultaneously, but this time Signora Evelina does not disappear. She is sitting there, close to the window, and it snows so lightly now that her wonderful profile is outlined as clearly as possible against the pane. Good heavens, how beautiful she is!

Signor Odoardo walks up and down the room, in the worst of humours. He feels that it is wrong not to go and see the fascinating widow, and that to go and see her would be still more wrong. The cloud has settled again upon Doretta's forehead, the same cloud that darkened it in the morning.

Not a word is said of La Fontaine's fable. Instead, Signor Odoardo grumbles irritably:

"This blessed room is as cold as ever."

"Why shouldn't it be," Doretta retorts with a touch of asperity, "when you open the window every few minutes?"

"Oho," Signor Odoardo says to himself, "it is time to have this matter out."

And, going up to Doretta, he takes her by the hand, leads her to the sofa, and lifts her on his knee.

"Now, then, Doretta, why is it that you are so disagreeable to Signora Evelina?"

The little girl, not knowing what to answer, grows red and embarrassed.

"What has Signora Evelina done to you?" her father continues.

"She hasn't done anything to me."

"And yet you don't like her."

Profound silence.

"And *she* likes you so much!"

"I don't care if she does!"

"You naughty child! . . . And what if, one of these days, you had to live with Signora Evelina?"

"I won't live with her—I won't live with her!" the child bursts out.

"Now you are talking foolishly," Signor Odoardo admonishes her in a severe tone, setting her down from his knee.

She bursts into passionate weeping.

"Come, Doretta, come. . . . Is this the way you keep your daddy company? . . . Enough of this, Doretta."

But, say what he pleases, Doretta must have her cry. Her brown eyes are swimming in tears, her little breast heaves, her voice is broken by sobs.

"What ridiculous whims!" Signor Odoardo exclaims, throwing his head back against the sofa cushions.

Signor Odoardo is unjust, and, what is worse, he does not believe what he is saying. He knows that this is no whim of Doretta's. He knows it better than the child herself, who would probably find it difficult to explain what she is undergoing. It is at once the presentiment of a new danger and the renewal of a bygone sorrow. Doretta was barely six years old when her mother died, and yet her remembrance is indelibly impressed upon the child's mind. And now it seems as though her mother were dying again.

"When you have finished crying, Doretta, you may come here," Signor Odoardo says.

Doretta, crouching in a corner of the room, cries less vehemently, but has not yet finished crying. Just like the weather outside,—it snows less heavily, but it still snows.

Signor Odoardo covers his eyes with his hand.

How many thoughts are thronging through his head, how many affections are contending in his heart ! If he could but banish the vision of Signora Evelina—but he tries in vain. He is haunted by those blue eyes, by that persuasive smile, that graceful and harmonious presence. He has but to say the word, and he knows that she will be his, to brighten his solitary home, and fill it with life and love. Her presence would take ten years from his age, he would feel as he did when he was betrothed for the first time. And yet—no ; it would not be quite like the first time.

He is not the same man that he was then, and she, *the other*, ah, how different *she* was from the Signora Evelina ! How modest and shy she was ! How girlishly reserved, even in the expression of her love ! How beautiful were her sudden blushes, how sweet the droop of her long, shyly-lowered lashes ! He had known her first in the intimacy of her own home, simple ! shy, a good daughter and a good sister, as she was destined to be a good wife and mother. For a while he had loved her in silence, and she had returned his love. One day, walking beside her in the garden, he had seized her hand with sudden impetuosity, and raising it to his lips, had said, " I care for you so much ! " and she, pale and trembling, had run to her mother's arms, crying out, " Oh, how happy I am ! "

Ah, those dear days—those dear days ! He was a poet then ; with the accent of sincerest passion he whispered in his love's ear :

" I love thee more than all the world beside,
My only faith and hope thou art,
My God, my country, and my bride—
Sole love of this unchanging heart ! "

Very bad poetry, but deliciously thrilling to his young betrothed. Oh, the dear, dear days ! Oh, the long hours that pass like a flash in delightful talk, the secrets that the soul first reveals to itself in revealing them to the beloved, the caresses longed for and yet half feared, the lovers' quarrels, the tears that are kissed away, the shynesses, the simplicity, the abandonment of a pure and passionate love—who may hope to know you twice in a lifetime ?

No, Signora Evelina can never restore what he had lost to Signor Odoardo. No, this self-possessed widow, who, after six months of mourning, has already started on the hunt for a second husband, cannot inspire him with the faith that he felt in *the other*. Ah, first-loved women, why is it that you must die ? For the dead give no kisses, no caresses, and the living long to be caressed and kissed.

Who talks of kisses ? Here is one that has alit, all soft and warm, on Signor Odoardo's lips, rousing him with a start.—Ah ! . . . Is it you, Doretta ?—It is Doretta, who says nothing, but who is longing to make it up with her daddy. She lays her cheek against his, he

presses her little head close, lest she should escape from him. He too is silent—what can he say to her?

It is growing dark, and the eyes of the cat *Melanio* begin to glitter in the corner by the stove. The man-servant knocks and asks if he is to bring the lamp.

"Make up the fire first," Signor Odoardo says.

The wood crackles and snaps, and sends up showers of sparks; then it bursts into flame, blazing away with a regular, monotonous sound, like the breath of a sleeping giant. In the dusk the firelight flashes upon the walls, brings out the pattern of the wall-paper, and travels far enough to illuminate a corner of the desk. The shadows lengthen and then shorten again, thicken and then shrink; everything in the room seems to be continually changing its size and shape. Signor Odoardo, giving free rein to his thoughts, evokes the vision of his married life, sees the baby's cradle, recalls her first cries and smiles, feels again his dying wife's last kiss, and hears the last word upon her lips,—*Doretta*. No, no, it is impossible that he should ever do anything to make his *Doretta* unhappy! And yet he is not sure of resisting Signora Evelina's wiles; he is almost afraid that, when he sees his enchantress on the morrow, all his strong resolves may take flight. There is but one way out of it.

"Doretta," says Signor Odoardo.

"Father?"

"Are you going to copy out your letter to your grandmamma this evening?"

"Yes, father."

"Wouldn't you rather go and see your grandmamma yourself?"

"With whom?" the child falters anxiously, her little heart beating a frantic tattoo as she awaits his answer.

"With me, Doretta."

"With you, daddy?" she exclaims, hardly daring to believe her ears.

"Yes, with me; with your daddy."

"Oh, daddy, *daddy*!" she cries, her little arms about his neck, her kisses covering his face. "Oh, daddy, my own dear daddy! When shall we start?"

"To-morrow morning, if you're not afraid of the snow."

"Why not now? Why not at once?"

"Gently—gently. Good Lord, doesn't the child want her dinner first?"

And Signor Odoardo, gently detaching himself from his daughter's embrace, rises and rings for the lamp. Then, instinctively, he glances once more towards the window. In the opposite house all is dark, and Signora Evelina's profile is no longer outlined against

the pane. The weather is still threatening, and now and then a snowflake falls. The servant closes the shutters and draws the curtains, so that no profane gaze may penetrate into the domestic sanctuary.

"We had better dine in here," Signor Odoardo says. "The dining-room must be as cold as Greenland."

Doretta, meanwhile, is convulsing the kitchen with the noisy announcement of the impending journey. At first she is thought to be joking, but when she establishes the fact that she is speaking seriously, it is respectfully pointed out to her that the master of the house must be crazy. To start on a journey in the depth of winter, and in such weather! If at least they were to wait for a fine day!

But what does Doretta care for the comments of the kitchen? She is beside herself with joy. She sings, she dances about the room, and breaks off every moment or two to give her father a kiss. Then she pours out the fulness of her emotion upon the cat Melanio and the doll Nini, promising the latter to bring her back a new frock from Milan.

At dinner she eats little and talks incessantly of the journey, asking again and again what time it is, and at what time they are to start.

"Are you afraid of missing the train?" Signor Odoardo asks with a smile.

And yet, though he dissembles his impatience, it is as great as hers. He longs to go away, far away. Perhaps he may not return until spring. He orders his luggage packed for an absence of two months.

Doretta goes to bed early, but all night long she tosses about under the bed-clothes, waking her nurse twenty times to ask: "Is it time to get up?"

Signor Odoardo, too, is awake when the man-servant comes to call him the next morning at six o'clock.

"What sort of a day is it?"

"Very bad, sir—just such another as yesterday. In fact, if I might make the suggestion, sir, if it's not necessary for you to start to-day——"

"It is, Angelo. Absolutely necessary."

At the station there are only a few sleepy, depressed-looking travellers wrapped in furs. They are all grumbling about the weather, about the cold, about the earliness of the hour, and declaring that nothing but the most urgent business would have got them out of bed at that time of day. There is but one person in the station who is all liveliness and smiles—Doretta.

The first-class compartment in which Signor Odoardo and his

daughter find themselves is bitterly cold, in spite of foot-warmers, but Doretta finds the temperature delicious, and, if she dared, would open the windows for the pleasure of looking out.

"Are you happy, Doretta?"

"Oh, so happy!"

Ten years earlier, on a pleasanter day, but also in winter, Signor Odoardo had started on his wedding-journey. Opposite him had sat a young girl, who looked as much like Doretta as a woman can look like a child; a pretty, sedate young girl, oh, so sweetly, tenderly in love with Signor Odoardo. And as the train started he had asked her the same question:

"Are you happy, Maria?"

And she had answered:

"Oh, so happy!" just like Doretta.

The train races and flies. Farewell, farewell for ever, Signora Evelina.

And did Signora Evelina die of despair?

Oh, no; Signora Evelina has a perfect disposition and a delightful home. The perfect disposition enables her not to take things too seriously, the delightful home affords her a thousand distractions. Its windows do not all look towards Signor Odoardo's residence. One of them, for example, commands a little garden belonging to a worthy bachelor who smokes his pipe there on pleasant days. Signora Evelina finds the worthy bachelor to her taste, and the worthy bachelor, who is an average-adjuster by profession, admires Signora Evelina's eyes, and considers her handsomely and solidly enough put together to rank A No. 1 on Lloyd's registers.

The result is that the bachelor now and then looks up at the window, and the Signora Evelina now and then looks down at the garden. The weather not being propitious to out-of-door conversation, Signora Evelina at length invites her neighbour to come and pay her a visit. Her neighbour hesitates and she renews the invitation. How can one resist such a charming woman? And what does one visit signify? Nothing at all. The excellent average-adjuster has every reason to be pleased with his reception, the more so as Signora Evelina actually gives him leave to bring his pipe the next time he comes. She adores the smell of a pipe. Signora Evelina is an ideal woman, just the wife for a business man who had not positively made up his mind to remain single. And as to that, muses the average-adjuster, have I ever positively made up my mind to remain single, and if I have, who is to prevent my changing it?

And so it comes to pass that when, after an absence of three months, Signor Odoardo returns home with Doretta, he receives

notice of the approaching marriage of Signora Evelina Chiocci, widow Ramboldi, with Signor Archimede Fagiuolo.

"Fagiuolo!" shouts Doretta, "*Fagiuolo!*"¹

The name seems to excite her unbounded hilarity; but I am under the impression that the real cause of her merriment is not so much Signora Evelina's husband as Signora Evelina's marriage.

¹ *Fagiuolo* : a simpleton.

ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

THE LOST LETTER

PROFESSOR ATTILIO CERNIERI, distinguished Egyptologist, Senator of the Kingdom, commander of numerous orders, active member of the Lincei, Corresponding Fellow of an infinite number of Italian and foreign societies and academies, was having his servant, Pomponio, open two cases of books arrived the evening before from Padua.

The books were the residue of a library that he had gathered at Padua when, twenty years before, he had filled the chair of neo-Latin in that university. Afterward he had travelled much for scientific purposes, had been called successively to the institute of higher learning in Florence, to the University of Naples, and finally the Ministry had solicited his presence in Rome, at the Sapienza, creating a chair especially for him, and offering him high emoluments.

For some time, during the Professor's peregrinations, the library, packed up and left with a colleague, had remained undisturbed at Padua. Then Cernieri had sent for a part of it when he was in Florence; another part later on when in Naples. Now having to come to Rome, with the intention of fixing there his permanent residence, he had determined to send for the two last cases.

To be sure, these books were not absolutely necessary to a man who, besides having recently refurnished his own library, had at his disposition the public and private libraries of the capital.

We live in a century in which everything proceeds by steam, even science. What is true to-day can readily be false to-morrow; and a volume runs the risk of being useless over night.

But in spite of its ten years of life, the monograph in which our hero had demonstrated, with ponderous arguments, that a group of roots hitherto believed to be of Celtic origin must be relegated to the Finnish Family, had not grown old. The book, small in weight but heavy in thought, had been translated into the languages of Europe, and the genial information had placed our professor "at the top of the scientific pyramid," to quote the words of an enthusiastic disciple, by the side of the principal living philologist, the famous Lowenstein of the University of Upsala. But whether

because the top of a pyramid is an uncomfortable place for two or not, Cernieri and Lowenstein had at first offered the interesting spectacle of two contestants who are vigorously striving to throw one another off, until, finally convinced of the uselessness of their struggles, they had changed rivalry into friendship.

The two learned men were, of course, two strugglers in the scientific arena, but instead of struggling with each other they struggled with the world at large. If by chance any mortal could be found rash enough to raise his crest and dare to endeavour to seat himself, too, on the top of the famous pyramid; had it been possible to penetrate the depths of the minds of the two "*chers confrères*," as they styled themselves in correspondence, it would probably have been discovered that each placed a very moderate estimate upon the virtues of the other. Lowenstein had very little faith in the Finnish roots; and Cernieri believed still less in the revolution brought about by Lowenstein in the study of the Hindu-Persian.

But let us leave Lowenstein in peace in distant Norway and turn our attention entirely to our illustrious compatriot. And to begin with, upon the afternoon in which Pomponio is opening the case of books, the Professor was but forty, though looking much older.

He was slightly stoop-shouldered and his ample forehead was seamed with premature wrinkles; his near-sighted eyes were hidden behind glasses, and were generally half-closed, like those of a sleepy pussy-cat. His hair was thin and gray, his beard straggling, ill-cared for, and nearly white. When he was young, Cernieri used to shave; but after it had happened several times that he in his absent-mindedness had shaved but half his face, and in that unusual condition had entered his classes, he had thought best to leave well enough alone. For the rest, the abstraction of professors is proverbial, and need not be dwelt on here, though upon one occasion he had lost his train by persisting in looking through the whole station at Bologna for a package he had in his hand.

Absent-minded people are generally very good-natured, but our professor was an exception to the rule. Ordinarily his lips were visited but by the scientific smile, made up of the superiority and commiseration with which a learned man hears of the absurdities committed by a brother colleague or the world at large. In society, upon the rare occasions he forced himself to enter it, he preferred standing aside, avoiding women with horror, for he had not the faintest idea what to say to them, and the dear creatures themselves were equally at a loss what to say to him, though five or six years ago, owing to the scarcity of husbands in this vale of tears, more than one mother had cast her eyes over him as a convenient parti for one of her daughters.

So at one time the Countess Pastori had been brave enough to invite him to dinner, hoping to make him marry her second daughter, who had bad teeth and weak eyes, and had not found any one who would have her. The young girl, properly coached, had received the professor with marked deference, had prepared with her own hand an exquisite peach marmalade, and had even gone to the length of evincing interest in Finnish roots. Cernieri, however, did not take the bait ; but, at once on guard, shortened his visit, and was careful never to set foot inside the doors of the Pastori mansion until the little Countess was betrothed to an importer of salt fish, who joined the cultivation of salmon with veneration for the titled nobility.

So warned by experience, he became gruffer than before, and more than ever inaccessible to any ideas of gallantry.

Every man has in the book of his life a secret page that a woman has made joyous or gloomy ; as far as Professor Cernieri was concerned, this page had remained a blank. At least so his friends said ; so would he have answered himself had he been asked, and he would have spoken in good faith. Absorbed as he was in research, he forgot things near at hand. Oh, why must he be made to remember the distant past ?

" Mercy on us ! " exclaimed Pomponio, who had begun to take the books out of the box. " Mercy on us, what a dust ! " Then added : " Really it would be much better if you would let me take them all downstairs, and dust them there."

But the Professor vigorously opposed the proposition. He wished it all to take place in his study, under his own eyes. He wanted, after they were dusted, himself to put the books in a case ready for their reception. And Pomponio, resigned to the inevitable, continued taking them out, dusting them as best he could, and handing them to his master, who, having glanced at the titles, put them in place.

The air was surcharged with dust, which covered the furniture, penetrated the pores, making both master and servant cough and sneeze constantly. " There is a spider's web on this," said Pomponio as he lifted a large folio. It proved to be an antique atlas of the world, printed at Gotha by Justus Perthes ; and it so happened that while the man was dusting it a little square envelope, yellow with age, dropped from its leaves, and fell upon the floor.

" Gracious, what is that ? " said Pomponio. " It looks like a letter." And putting down the atlas, he stooped to pick it up.

But the Professor had anticipated him, and, half-dazed, was turning the letter round and round. Without doubt it *was* a letter, and one of his own at that, still sealed, the stamp uncanceled, addressed in his own writing ; the heavy, weighty writing of a man born to be a cavaliere of many orders ; a fellow of many societies.

It was a too distinct hand, giving assurance that the letter would reach its destination if it had been posted !

"Alla gentile Signorina Maria Lisa Altavilla, Firenze, Via dei Servi, No. 25—1 Floor."

That name appearing so unexpectedly under his eyes carried Professor Cernieri back twenty years, forcing from the mists of oblivion a slender, graceful girl, whose lovely countenance was crowned with an expression of rare sweetness. For her alone had his heart ever quickened. For her sake alone had he once for one day, for an hour, thought seriously of taking a wife. And then ?—

Pomponio, who was consumed with curiosity, had noiselessly approached the professor and murmured : "But how in the world did it get hidden in that book ?"

Cernieri turned brusquely—"What business have you here ? Leave the room."

"Shall I not go on ?"

"No, not now. Go away."

"Has anything happened ?"

"Nothing. If I need you, I will ring."

Pomponio reluctantly retired. He would have given anything to know what sort of a letter that was which had so disturbed his employer.

When he was gone, the Professor sat down in his great armchair, and, with trembling fingers, broke the seal that Maria Lisa Altavilla had never been allowed to do. And this was what he had written in Padua, October 15, 1875 :

"CARA SIGNORINA—I have just received the sad announcement, and hasten to assure you of my sincere sympathy in your great grief. Last July, when I had the honour in Venice of being often with your father and yourself, I was a witness of your solicitude for the precious, highly esteemed soul.

"Do you remember (I can never forget it) that morning's trip to the sea ? We had first visited San Lazzaro, where he had been good enough to listen with interest to my explanation in regard to the mummy preserved in the Museum of the Mechitaristi Fathers ; then having crossed to Sant' Elizabeth on the Lido, we repaired to the baths lately established there. Your father, feeling rather tired, remained in the hotel with a friend while we went to walk on the beach.

"The day was deliciously balmy, the sun's rays tempered behind little clouds, so that you closed your red silk umbrella. The wavelets lapped the shore softly at our feet where our footprints marked the sand. You confided to me that for several years your father's health seemed to grow worse ; how the various doctors, who had

been called in, had suggested this remedy and that without being at all able to arrest the course of the disease, which was overwhelming you with terror. You told me of the tender affection that led him to hide his suffering from you ; he who had never before concealed anything. Growing more confidential, you told me of your happy home life, of the full accord of your mutual thoughts and feelings, of your deep love each for the other, cemented by sorrow ; for, from a large family, there now remained but you two in the world. Then, overcome by emotion, you ceased speaking, your eyes full of tears.

"What words struggled for utterance on my part ! I cannot express all that was in my heart. I am naturally timid, and I will acknowledge a great horror of anything that will distract me from my studies or interfere with my habits ; but I feel sure I made you understand, Signorina, how deeply I sympathised with you. I know I told you I was at your service whenever you might choose to call upon me. 'Thanks,' you murmured gently while your hand trembled in mine. Then you insisted upon going back to your father.

"We spoke no word as we went, but it seemed to me that our souls understood one another. In a day or two you had quitted Venice without my having the opportunity of seeing you again alone.

"Now, Signorina, the greatest of sorrows has come to you. Now is the time for you to test the true value of your friends.

"I would wish to come myself to Florence, but I am forced to leave in a few hours for London, in order to be present at the Congress of Orientalists, which opens there on the 19th inst.

"From England I may possibly start on a long journey out of Europe. My movements will depend upon you ; one word from you will take me back to Italy. In any event, I shall be in London all October, and I beg you will let me have a line from you, *Poste Restante*. Think that I, too, and for a much longer period than you, have been alone in the world. Believe me always, yours sincerely,

"ATTILIO CERNIERI."

Twice the Professor read the four pages through, forcing himself to recall the day, the hour, the place in which he had written it ; seeking to explain to himself how he could have forgotten to post it, as well as that the absolute silence of Maria Lisa Altavilla had not aroused some suspicion in his mind ; why he had never written again to make sure. And this is what he remembered.

The mortuary notice had arrived one morning as he was in the midst of packing, and his thoughts had turned persistently to the young girl he had known three months before in Venice, and who had shown such perfect confidence in him. All day he had debated

within himself whether he should merely send her his condolences or if he ought to say something more in regard to the sentiments with which she had inspired him, in which perhaps she shared. She was not an ordinary girl, this Maria Lisa. She seemed created to be the companion of a scholar.

Had she not been her father's secretary and could she not be his ? To learn two or three languages so that she might help him ; to take notes for him ; to keep his work in order ; to correct printer's proofs, and when he was leaving for a congress or scientific mission, to pack his trunks and accompany him to the station ; perhaps sometimes go along to look after the nuisance of tickets, to treat with hotel proprietors, cabmen, et cetera. Viewed in this light, matrimony did not seem such a terrible abyss, but a tranquil port, in which to take shelter from storms. And that evening, at the same time with other letters, he had written that one to Maria Lisa ; had written with an expansion and an abandon that had filled him with wonder ; even now he was amazed, as he felt once again the unaccustomed sweetness of the thing.

Once again he was in his little room in his apartment at Padua ; on the table an oil lamp was burning ; spread out before him lay the atlas of Menke at the page that told of " *Egyptus ante Cambysii tempus.*" He had been consulting it before answering his friend Morrison of the University of Edinburgh, who was insisting that they should together visit the ruins of Thebes in Upper Egypt, and he leaving his decision until after the Congress had, on the chance of the journey, corrected and amplified the itinerary to take in Ithaca, Apollonopolis, Syene, and then Cernieri remembered his landlady had knocked at his door to tell him the carriage was there and that she had already put his luggage, his plaid, and his umbrella in. He had shut the atlas and put it back upon the shelf hurriedly, hurriedly he had pushed the letters already stamped into his pocket ; hurriedly had rushed down and thrown himself into the cab.

By what strange fate had one of the letters been shut in the atlas ? By what carelessness, in putting the rest in the mail-box, had he not noticed that one was missing, the most important of all, was an enigma the learned professor was unable to solve. He was already to swear that never for an instant had the thought occurred to him that he had not posted the letter ; indeed, he remembered, how for a number of days he was dumbfounded at his own rashness.

Why had he not considered the matter more fully ? Why, with one of those words which cannot be taken back, had he run the risk of sacrificing that greatest of blessings—independence ? Why had he played all his future on one card ? He was a man of honour ; had he received a favourable reply from Maria Lisa, nothing would have

induced him to draw back. If she said no, then he had invited a needless repulse.

Dio buono, what madness had taken possession of him ? It was more than likely that a girl, who was not beautiful and hadn't a penny of dot, would remain single for two or three years at least and then he could have sought opportunities of seeing her and knowing her better, and of weighing the pros and cons.

So during the first week in London, while the temptation was increasing for the journey to the Orient with Morrison and a young "docente" from Heidelberg, who had offered himself as a companion, he was upset and nervous, and trembled at every distribution of letters, not knowing what he wished or feared. Then as time passed and he read his two theses, and became absorbed in the work of the Congress and drawn within the circle of illustrious scholars, who were greeting him as a new luminary in the world of science, the image of the poor absent orphan faded gradually away and a secret hope sprang up in his heart that he had regained his liberty through the continued silence of Maria Lisa without the humiliation of a refusal.

He could always remember he had done his duty ; it was not his fault if his offer had not been accepted.

So one day, early in November, he could exclaim with Julius Caesar :

" *Alea jacta est.*"

A rapid flight through Europe brought him with his companions to Brindisi, whence they embarked for Alexandria. Two years were passed in Upper Egypt and Abyssinia in the study of hieroglyphics and ruins, and in sending learned treatises to the principal European Reviews. Magazines, journals, letters from men of science, elections to academies poured in from Italy, from France, from Germany ; some silly letters even came from his landlady in Padua. From Florence, from Maria Lisa Altavilla, not a word. Then when he got home, he almost forgot all about her. Only two years had passed, but they were worth a century to him, and preceding events assumed to his eyes a vague, nebulous distance. So when he had heard that three months before Maria Lisa had married a " Pretore residente " in an out-of-the-way corner of Sicily, he had not troubled himself more than he could help about it. He had to choose from the various offers of the Ministry, he had to write an article for the *Edinburgh Review* on Assyrian Antiquities ; finally, he had to finish a weighty thesis on those Finnish and Celtic roots, for whose sake he had resolved to devote himself entirely to philology at the expense of everything else.

Maria Lisa was so small in comparison, and matrimony might

have been such a nuisance. Only some time afterward, as he was on the point of accepting a Chair in Florence, he was assailed with scruples.

Suppose through the changing of her husband's jurisdiction the lady were now in Tuscany ? How ought he to act ? To seem indifferent and pretend not to recognise her, or to reproach her with the rudeness with which she had treated him ?

Alas ! the professor was soon relieved of all doubts.

La Maria Lisa Altavilla ? the daughter of the Chevalier Altavilla ? Who had married the pretore Carlucci ? Poor thing ! she had died in Sicily of malarial fever before she had been married more than ten months.

Dead ! Attilio Cernieri felt penetrated through with pity and regret. Dead, so young ; she, who might have been his wife ! Then he would now be alone with his life all wrecked about him ! Ah ! it was indeed a thousand times better that Maria Lisa had not answered him ! Better not to have gotten into habits that would now have to be broken ! Better not to have grown accustomed to having a woman by his side. Those who know declare it is difficult to do without them then.

In a word, Cernieri had not been slow to comfort himself. And then, too, Time had fulfilled her part, spreading a thick veil over the fleeting episode ; covering even the name of Maria Lisa with oblivion.

Now the old letter found within the pages of the ancient atlas had brought it all back. Before the middle-aged man, grown old in study, hardened with egotism, rose an enchanting picture of youth, clothed in shining colours, full of intangible sweetness. Pressing the poor, little yellow sheet between his hands, he beheld once more Maria Lisa's sweet face. As she sadly gazed at him she seemed to say : " Why in my hour of need did you not send me a word of sympathy ? Chance acquaintances pitied my grief ; thou, who hadst let me believe didst love me, alone remained mute and insensible. I called upon thee too. Ah ! wretched indeed is she who trusts in a man ! "

Cernieri seemed to hear Maria Lisa's voice pronounce the words.

And she had died without hearing his vindication, without knowing the truth. It is indeed " Sorrow's crown of sorrow," to be faded with the irrevocable, to be tormented with wrongs that cannot be repaired, with misunderstandings that cannot be removed.

But the letter, which the grave professor continued to hold unfolded before him, told, not only that Maria Lisa was dead, believing him worse than he deserved, but also that in his life there had been a moment of poetry, of abandon, and of love, and that that moment had remained barren. Never again could life bring him such another. Never again would his heart quicken for a woman's sake.

Never again could flow from his pen words which might seem to us cold and unconventional, but to him seemed burning with ardour and love. And he asked himself : " Suppose that letter had gone, had arrived at its destination and Maria Lisa had answered : ' I understand what thou wishest ; I consent. I love thee and am willing to be thine. Come.' "

Then certainly, he would not have undertaken his great journey to Egypt and Assyria. Would not have deciphered hieroglyphics or interpreted the language of the ruins. Perhaps, though, he would have had sons of his own. Perhaps domestic cares might have retarded his fame, his activity might have been clogged and honours and decorations might not have fallen so abundantly upon his head. He might not even have made his luminous discovery about the Finnish roots. Perchance another would now occupy his enviable position on the very top of the scientific pyramid by the side of Lowenstein of the University of Upsala. If all that might have happened, a man like Professor Attilio Cernieri ought to rejoice that it had not. And still—and still !—A persistent, hungry doubt would not allow him to quiet his soul with this philosophic consolation. Would it not have been better to have sacrificed a little glory to have had a little love ?

The Professor Attilio Cernieri lacked courage to tear or destroy the letter. He placed it in his desk, recalled Pomponio, and desired him to resume his interrupted labour.

But that evening in his study, the temptation to again behold those words of twenty years ago overcame him anew. And afterward there did not pass a day in which he did not take the poor little worn sheet from its envelope and read it over and over.

Then he would look at the envelope, at the stamp, upon which the Post had impressed no mark, and murmured once more :

" If the letter had only gone ! "

ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

THE THEOREM OF PYTHAGORAS

"THE forty-seventh proposition!" said Professor Roveni, in a tone of mild sarcasm, as he unfolded a paper which I had extracted, very gingerly—from an urn standing on his desk. Then he showed it to the Government Inspector who stood beside him, and whispered something into his ear. Finally, he handed me the document, so that I might read the question with my own eyes.

"Go up to the blackboard," added the Professor, rubbing his hands.

The candidate who had preceded me in the arduous trial, and had got out of it as best he could, had left the school-room on tip-toe, and, in opening the door, let in a long streak of sunshine, which flickered on the wall and floor, and in which I had the satisfaction of seeing my shadow. The door closed again, and the room was once more plunged into twilight. It was a stifling day in August, and the great sun-blinds of blue canvas were a feeble defence against the glass, so that the Venetian shutters had been closed as well. The little light which remained was concentrated on the master's desk and the blackboard, and was, at any rate, sufficient to illuminate my defeat.

"Go to the blackboard and draw the figure," repeated Professor Roveni, perceiving my hesitation.

Tracing the figure was the only thing I knew how to do; so I took a piece of chalk and conscientiously went to work. I was in no hurry; the more time I took up in this graphic part, the less remained for oral explanation.

But the Professor was not the man to lend himself to my innocent artifice.

"Make haste," he said. "You are not going to draw one of Raphael's Madonnas."

I had to come to an end.

"Put the letters now. Quick!—you are not giving specimens of handwriting. Why did you erase that G?"

"Because it is too much like the C I have made already. I was going to put an H instead of it."

"What a subtle idea!" observed Roveni, with his usual irony. "Have you finished?"

"Yes, sir," said I; adding under my breath, "More's the pity!"

"Come,—why are you standing there moonstruck? Enunciate the theorem!"

Then began my sorrows. The terms of the question had escaped my memory.

"In a triangle . . ." I stammered.

"Go on."

I took courage and said all I knew.

"In a triangle . . . the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides."

"In any triangle?"

"No, no!" suggested a compassionate soul behind me.

"No, sir!" said I.

"Explain yourself. In what sort of a triangle?"

"A right-angled triangle," whispered the prompting voice.

"A right-angled triangle," I repeated, like a parrot.

"Silence there, behind!" shouted the Professor; and then continued, turning to me, "Then, according to you, the big square is equal to each of the smaller ones?"

Good gracious! the thing was absurd. But I had a happy inspiration.

"No, sir, to both of them added together."

"To the sum then,—say to the sum. And you should say *equivalent*, not equal. Now demonstrate."

I was in a cold perspiration—icy cold—despite the tropical temperature. I looked stupidly at the right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse, and its two subsidiary squares; I passed the chalk from one hand to the other and back again, and said nothing, for the very good reason that I had nothing to say.

No one prompted me any more. It was so still you might have heard a pin drop. The Professor fixed his grey eyes on me, bright with a malignant joy; the Government Inspector was making notes on a piece of paper. Suddenly the latter respectable personage cleared his throat, and Professor Roveni said in his most insinuating manner, "Well?"

I did not reply.

Instead of at once sending me about my business, the Professor wished to imitate the cat which plays with the mouse before tearing it to pieces.

"How?" he added. "Perhaps you are seeking a new solution. I do not say that such may not be found, but we shall be quite satisfied with one of the old ones. Go on. Have you forgotten that

you ought to produce the two sides, DE, MF, till they meet ? Produce them—go on ! ”

I obeyed mechanically. The figure seemed to attain a gigantic size, and weighed on my chest like a block of stone.

“ Put a letter at the point where they meet—an N. So. And now ? ”

I remained silent.

“ Don’t you think it necessary to draw a line from N through A to the base of the square, BHIC ? ”

I thought nothing of the kind ; however, I obeyed.

“ Now you will have to produce the two sides, BH and IC.”

Ouf ! I could endure no more.

“ Now,” the Professor went on, “ a child of two could do the demonstration. Have you nothing to observe with reference to the two triangles, BAC and NAE ? ”

As silence only prolonged my torture, I replied laconically, “ Nothing.”

“ In other words, you know nothing at all ? ”

“ I think you ought to have seen that some time ago,” I replied, with a calm worthy of Socrates.

“ Very good, very good ! Is that the tone you take ? And don’t you even know that the theorem of Pythagoras is also called the Asses’ Bridge, because it is just the asses who cannot get past it ? You can go. I hope you understand that you have not passed in this examination. That will teach you to read *Don Quixote* and draw cats during my lessons ! ”

The Government Inspector took a pinch of snuff ; I laid down the chalk and the duster, and walked majestically out of the hall, amid the stifled laughter of my school-fellows.

Three or four comrades who had already passed through the ordeal with no very brilliant result were waiting for me outside.

“ Ploughed, then ? ”

“ Ploughed ! ” I replied, throwing myself into an attitude of heroic defiance ; adding presently, “ I always said that mathematics were only made for dunces.”

“ Of course ! ” exclaimed one of my rivals.

“ What question did you have ? ” asked another.

“ The fourty-seventh proposition. What can it matter to me whether the square of the hypothenuse is or is not equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides ? ”

“ Of course it can’t matter to you—nor to me—nor to any one in the world,” chimed in a third with all the petulant ignorance of fourteen. “ If it is equal, why do they want to have it repeated so often ? and if it is not, why do they bother us with it ? ”

“ Believe me, you fellows,” said I, resuming the discussion with

the air of a person of long experience, "you may be quite certain of it, the whole system of instruction is wrong; and as long as the Germans are in the country, it will be so!"

So, being fully persuaded that our failure was a protest against the Austrian dominion, and a proof of vivid and original genius, we went home, where, for my part, I confess I found that the first enthusiasm soon evaporated.

My ignominious failure in this examination had a great influence on my future. Since it was absolutely impossible for me to understand mathematics, it was decided that very day that I was to leave school, especially as the family finances made it necessary for me to begin earning something as soon as might be.

It was the most sensible resolution that could have been come to, and I had no right to oppose it; yet, I confess, I was deeply saddened by it. My aversion to mathematics did not extend to other branches of learning, in which I had made quite a respectable show; and besides, I loved the school. I loved those sacred cloisters which we boys filled with life and noise,—I loved the benches carved with our names,—even the blackboard which had been the witness of my irreparable defeat.

I blamed Pythagoras' theorem for it all. With some other question—who knows?—I might just have scraped through, by the skin of my teeth, as I had done in past years. But, as Fate would have it, it was just that one!

I dreamt about it all night. I saw it before me—the fatal square with its triangle atop, and the two smaller squares, one sloping to the right, and the other to the left, and a tangle of lines, and a great confusion of letters; and heard beating through my head like the strokes of a hammer— $BAC = NAF$; $RNAB = DEAB$.

It was some time before I was free from that nightmare and could forget Pythagoras and his three squares. In the long run, however, Time, who with his sponge wipes out so many things from the book of memory, had nearly effaced this, when, a few weeks ago, the ill-omened figure appeared to me in one of my son's exercise-books.

"Has this curse been transmitted to my descendants?" I exclaimed. "Poor boy! What if the theorem of Pythagoras should be as fatal to him as it has been to me?"

I thought I would question him about it on his return from school.

"So," I began gravely, "you have already reached the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid in your geometry?"

"Yes, father," he replied simply.

"A difficult theorem," I added, shaking my head.

"Do you think so?" he asked with a smile.

"Oh! you want to boast and make me think you find it easy?"

"But I do find it easy." •

"I should like to see you try it"—the words slipped out almost involuntarily. "It's no use—I can't bear vanity and boasting."

"At once," replied the dauntless youth. And action succeeded words. He took a piece of paper and a pencil, and quickly traced the cabalistic figure.

"As for demonstrations," he began, "there are plenty to choose from. Is it all the same to you which I take?"

"Yes," I replied mechanically. In fact it *had* to be all the same to me. If there had been a hundred demonstrations I should not have known one from the other.

"Then we'll take the most usual one," my mathematician went on; and proceeded to produce the lines which Professor Roveni, of respected memory, had made me produce twenty-seven years before, and, with the accents of the sincerest conviction, prepared to prove to me that the triangle BAC was equal to the triangle NAF, and so on.

"And now," said my son, when he had finished, "we can, if you wish, arrive at the same conclusion in another way."

"For pity's sake!" I exclaimed in terror, "since we have reached the journey's end, let us rest."

"But I am not tired."

Not even tired! Was the boy an embryo Newton? And yet people talk about the principle of heredity!

"I suppose you are at the top of your class in mathematics," I said, not untouched by a certain reverential awe.

"No, no," he replied. "There are two better than I. Besides, you know very well that everybody—except downright asses—understands the forty-seventh proposition."

"*Except downright asses!*" After twenty-seven years I heard, from the lips of my own son, almost the very identical words which Professor Roveni had used on the memorable day of the examination. And this time they were heightened by the savage irony of the added "*You know very well!*"

I wished to save appearances, and added in haste—

"Of course I know that. I was only in fun. I hope you would not be such a fool as to be proud of a small thing like that."

Meanwhile, however, my Newton had repented of his too sweeping assertion.

"After all," he went on, with some embarrassment, "there are some who never attend to their lesson, and then . . . even if they are not asses. . . ."

It seemed to me that he was offering me a loophole of escape, and with a sudden impulse of candour—

"That must be the way of it," I said. "I suppose I never paid attention."

"How! You?" exclaimed my boy, reddening to the roots of his hair. Yet . . . I would bet something that, at the bottom of his heart, he was longing to laugh.

I put my hand over his mouth.

"Hush," I said; "we will not pursue our inquiries into detail."

Well, the Theorem of Pythagoras has, as you see, cost me a new and very serious humiliation. In spite of this, I no longer keep up the old grudge. There will never be any confidence between us, but I consider it as a family friend whom we must not treat with rudeness, though he may not be personally congenial to ourselves.

LUIGI CAPUANA

1839—

THE RIVAL EARTHQUAKES

THERE was a long-standing rivalry—and one that was not professional alone—between the telegraph clerks of Pietranera and Golastretta. It is said to have begun at the Technical College, when the former carried off a silver medal hotly contested by the other ; but this is not quite certain.

What is certain is that Pippo Corradi could not undertake the smallest thing but Nino d'Arco immediately proceeded to do likewise. Thus when the former took a fancy to become an amateur conjurer, Nino at once went in search of the necessary apparatus for amusing his friends with the miracles of white magic. He was not a success ; he raised many a laugh by his want of skill ; but this did not prevent him from throwing away more money still on boxes with false bottoms, pistols to shoot playing cards instead of balls, wonderful balls which multiply and grow larger in your hands, and the like. Cost what it might, he was determined to astonish his Golastretta friends, who extolled in his presence the portents they had seen accomplished at Pietranera by Corradi, and derided him by way of contrast.

Then when Pippo Corradi, who was of a strange fickleness in his tastes, gave up white magic in order to devote himself to music, and the study of the clarionet in particular, Nino d'Arco suddenly laid aside the magic toys, which had already wearied him not a little, took music lessons from the parish organist, bought a brand new ebony clarionet, and rode over on a donkey to call on Corradi, under the pretext of consulting him on his choice, but with the sole intention of humiliating him. It was the only time he ever succeeded. He found him blowing into the mouthpiece of a boxwood instrument, which he had bought second-hand for a few francs from an old clarionet player in the town band. Nino swelled visibly with satisfaction at seeing the admiration and envy in his rival's eyes when he opened the leather case and showed him the polished keys of white metal, shining even more than the freshly varnished wood.

Nino put the instrument together delicately, and set it to his

mouth, thinking to astonish Pippo with a scale in semitones, but he unluckily broke down in the middle. Then was Corradi able to take his revenge ; and not content with having played scales in all tones, major, minor, diatonic, and chromatic, suddenly, without warning Nino, who kept staring at his fingers manœuvring over the holes and keys, he dashed point-blank into his *pièce de résistance*, *La Donna è Mobile*, tootling away quite divinely, till checked by the imperative need of taking breath. His eyes were nearly staring out of his head ; his face was purple—but that was nothing ! He chuckled inwardly at Nino's crestfallen look ; and the latter, taking his instrument to pieces, put it back in the case, thus declaring himself vanquished.

Nino, returning to Golastretta, vented his vexation on his ass, because she would not go at a trot—just as though it had been she who taught Corradi to play *La Donna è Mobile*. So true it is that passion renders man unjust ! He rushed at once to his master to learn *La Donna è Mobile* for himself, so as to be able, in a short time, to play it before his hated rival. The latter, however, had another great advantage, besides that of being able to murder *Rigoletto* ; he was the local post-master. In this point it was useless trying to rival him, however much Nino might dream of a spacious office, like that at Pietranera, where Corradi, between the sale of one stamp and the next, between registering a letter, and administering a reprimand to the postman, could divert himself by blowing into his clarionet to his heart's content ! Whereas he, Nino, was forced to escape from the house if he wished to practise and remain at peace with his family ! Corradi, in his post-office, disturbed no one.

Nino did not know what a torment for the neighbourhood that clarionet was, shrilling from morning to night, with Corradi's usual obstinacy in anything he undertook. The shopkeeper opposite, poor wretch, swore all day long worse than a Turk, and did not know whether he was standing on his head or his feet every time that Pippo began to repeat the *Donna è Mobile*—that is to say, swore seven or eight times in the day. He made mistakes in his weights, he counted his change wrong ;—though it is only fair to say that these errors were oftener in his own favour than in that of his customers. And if by any chance he saw Corradi at the window, he raised his hands towards him with a supplicating gesture, pretending to be jocular.

“ You want to make me die of a fit ! Good Lord ! ”

Of all this Nino d'Arco was quite ignorant when he started for Pietranera a month later, to surprise Corradi with *Mira Norma*, which he had learnt, in addition to the air which first roused his emulation. He found Pippo adding up his monthly accounts, and not disposed to talk about music or anything else. The fact was that the shopkeeper opposite had indeed fallen down dead in a fit

at the third or fourth rendering of *La Donna è Mobile*, as he had said, just as though he had had a presentiment of what was to happen. The occurrence had such an effect on Pippo that he felt as if he had killed the man, and could not bear to touch the clarionet again. He would not even mention the subject. Nino bit his lips and returned home, without having so much as opened his clarionet case. Once more it was the ass who paid the penalty. He had to relieve his feelings on some one or something.

If there were any need of an instance to prove that emulation is the most powerful agent in the development of the human faculties, this one would suffice. Seeing that Corradi had renounced the clarionet and all its delights, Nino no longer felt the slightest inclination to go on wasting his breath on his instrument, though it were of ebony, with keys of white metal. As a faithful historian, I ought to add that for one moment he was tempted by the idea of trying to attain to the glory of causing some one's death by a fit ; but whether the Golastretta people had harder tympanums than those of Pietranera, or whether he himself was not possessed of the necessary strength and perseverance, certain it is that no human victim fell to Nino d'Arco's clarionet. And the fact of having no death on his conscience made him feel degraded in his own eyes for some time.

These had been the preludes to deeper and more difficult contests with his old schoolfellow.

Golastretta was situated between the central office of the province and the rival station of Pietranera ; and thus it was Nino's duty to signal to his hated colleague the mean time by which he was to regulate his clock—a supremacy which Corradi could never take from him. But this was a joy of short duration.

Having very little to do, he was wont, after he had finished reading the *Gazette* or the last paper-covered novel, to snatch forty winks at his ease in the office. One morning, when he least expected it, the machine began clicking, and would not stop. It was his dear friend at Pietranera who kept sending despatches on despatches, and would not let him drop off comfortably.

By listening attentively, he soon made out what was the matter. The village of Pietranera had begun, on the previous evening, to dance like a man bitten by the tarantula, set in motion by earthquake-shocks repeated from hour to hour. The Syndic was telegraphing to the Vice-Prefect, the Prefect, the Meteorological Office of the province, in the name of the terrified population. And Corradi, too, was telegraphing on his own account, signalling the shocks as fast as they occurred, and indicating their length, or the nature of the movement—in order to gain credit with his superiors,

said Nino d'Arco, vexed that Golastretta should not have its half-dozen earthquakes as well.

How cruelly partial was Nature! Scarcely twenty kilometres away she was rendering Corradi an immense service with eight, ten, twenty shocks—between day and night—within the week; and for him not even the smallest vestige of any shock whatever. He could get no peace, and kept his ear to the instrument.

One day, behold! there passed the announcement of a scientific commission on its way to Pietranera in order to study these persistent seismic phenomena. A few days later he became aware of the transit of another despatch appointing the Pietranera telegraph-agent director of the Meteorologico-Seismic station, which the commission had thought it advisable to establish at that place. In a month from that time the speedy arrival of a large number of scientific instruments was wired down from headquarters.

Nino d'Arco could stand it no longer; nothing would serve but he must go and see with his own eyes what under the canopy that Meteorologico-Seismic Observatory could be which would not let him live in peace.

He could not recover from the astonishment into which he was thrown by the sight of all these machines already set up in position, whose strange names Pippo Corradi reeled off with the greatest ease, as he explained the working of each. Rain-gauge, wind-gauge, barometers, maximum and minimum thermometers, hygrometers, and besides that a tromometer, and all sorts of devilries for marking the very slightest shocks of earthquake, indicating their nature, and recording the very hour at which they occurred, by means of stop-watches. . . . Nino was very far from understanding it all, but made believe to do so; and, at last, he remained quite a time gazing through a magnifying-glass at the pendulum constructed to register the movements of the earthquake by marking them with a sharp point on a sheet of smoked glass placed beneath it. . . . The pendulum was at that moment moving, sometimes from right to left, sometimes backwards and forwards, but with so imperceptible a movement that it could not be discerned by the naked eye. . . . Suddenly—*drin! drin!*—there is a ringing of bells, the pendulum quivers. . . .

"A shock!" And Pippo, triumphant, rushes to the telegraph instrument to announce it.

"I did not feel anything!" said Nino d'Arco, white with terror.

And he hastened to go. But he was simply knocked to pieces by all those machines and the satisfied air of his colleague. The latter already signed himself "Director of the Meteorologico-Seismic Observatory at Pietranera," and seemed a great personage—reflected

Nino—even to him, who knew very well who he was, a telegraph clerk just like himself!

All along the homeward road, when he had finished settling accounts with the ass, he ruminated over the hundreds of francs which all that apparatus must have cost. . . . The seismographic pendulum, however, was only worth eighteen. . . . He would like to have at least a pendulum. . . . What would he do with it when he had it? No one could tell; least of all himself. But the pendulum kept vibrating in his brain all the week, backwards and forwards, right and left, scratching the smoked glass at every stroke. Nino seemed to himself to be always standing behind the magnifying-glass, as he had done at Pietranera. It was a diabolical persecution!

He had to humble himself before his detected colleague, in order to get information, explanations and instruments; but after all, in the end, the pendulum was there in its place, near the office window. It had cost him nearly half his month's salary. But what of that? Now, he too could telegraph the most beautiful earthquakes, on occasion.

But just look at the perversity of things! That infamous pendulum—as if on purpose to spite him—remained perfectly motionless, even if one looked at it through the magnifying-glass. Nino, who passed whole days ruining his eyes with that glass, anxious to observe the first trace of movement, so as to signal it, and thus begin his competition with the Pietranera observatory, ground his teeth with rage. Especially on the days when his fortunate rival seemed to be mocking him with the ticking of the messages which announced to the Provincial Office some little shock recorded by the instruments at Pietranera. For an earthquake—a real earthquake—Nino would have given, who can tell what? perhaps his very soul. In the meantime he dreamt of earthquakes, often awaking terrified in the night, uncertain whether it were a dream, or the shock had really taken place; but the pendulum remained stern and immovable. It was enough to drive the veriest saint desperate. Ah! Was that the game? Did the earthquakes obstinately refuse to manifest themselves? Well, he would invent them. After all, who could contradict him? And so that unlucky parish, which had been for centuries quietly anchored to the rocky mountain-side, began to perform in its turn—in the Reports of the Meteorological Office at Rome—an intricate dance of shocks, slight shocks, and approaches to shocks; there was no means of keeping it still any longer. And as Nino could not forego the glory of showing his friends the sheet where his name appeared in print beside those of several famous men of science, the report spread through the country that

the mountain was moving, imperceptibly, and threatened to come down in a landslide.

"Is it really true?" the most timid came to ask.

"True, indeed!" replied Nino solemnly, and pointed to the pendulum; but he would allow no one to examine it at close quarters.

Just as though it had been done on purpose, the Pietranera observatory no longer signalled any disturbances since Golastretta had begun to amuse itself by frequent vibrations; and Pippo Corradi, suspecting the trick of his colleague, was gnawing his own heart out over all the false indications which were quietly being foisted in among the genuine ones of the official report, and making a mock of Science.

He, for his own part, did his work seriously and scrupulously, even leaving his dinner when the hour for observation came; and his reports might be called models of scientific accuracy. Ought he to denounce his colleague? to unmask him? He could not make up his mind. The latter, as bold as brass, went on making his village quake and tremble, as though it were nothing at all.

This time the proverb that "lies have short legs" did not hold good; for the lies in question reached Tacchini at Rome, and Father Denza at Moncalieri. Perhaps, even, they confused the calculations of those unfortunate scientists, who were very far from suspecting, in the remotest degree, the wickedness of Nino.

But one day, all of a sudden, the Golastretta pendulum awoke from its torpor, and began to move behind the magnifying-glass, although to the naked eye its motion was scarcely perceptible.

Nino gave a howl of joy. "At last! at last!"

To the first person who happened to come into the office he said, with a majestic sweep of the arm, "Look here!"

"What does it mean?"

"We shall have a big earthquake!" and he rubbed his hands.

"Mercy!"

The man, who had felt his head turning round with the continued agitation of the pendulum, and was struck with consternation to find that it could scarcely be perceived without the magnifier, rushed at once to spread the terrible news in streets, shops, and cafés. In an hour the telegraph office was invaded—besieged. Everybody wished to see with his or her own eyes, so as to be certain, and then take a resolution. And the people who had seen frightened the others with their accounts, exaggerating matters, giving explanations more terrifying than those they had received and half understood, and so increasing the panic, which now began to seize on the most sceptical spirits. An extraordinary success for Nino d'Arco! He seemed to see before him the image of his colleague, jaundiced with envy, and again rubbed his hands with delight. Outside, the street was full

of people discussing the affair with comments. Women were crying, boys shouting, "Is it still moving?" "Worse than before." "Oh! blessed Madonna!" The parish priest hastened to the spot, frightened as badly as the rest by the news which had been carried to him by the sacristan; and scarcely had he looked through the glass than he sprang from his chair as if he had felt the ground rocking under his feet.

"It is the judgment of God, gentlemen! On account of our sins, gentlemen!"

Then the people began to get away as fast as they could.

There was a banging of shutters, a hurried closing of doors, a rushing about, a shouting of each other's names. "Is it still moving?" "Worse than ever!" So that at last Nino d'Arco himself no longer felt easy. And from time to time he turned back to look once more at the pendulum, which continued to vibrate. It was the first time that Nino found himself indeed, as it were, face to face with a distinct indication of earthquake, after the hundred or so of shocks, of all sorts, strengths, and sizes, which he had invented and caused to be published in the Report at Rome. And now it was not exactly an amusing thing—that dumb menace, to which his ignorance gave a false significance. Pendulum of the devil! Would it never be still? A beautiful invention of science, calculated to kill a peaceful citizen with anticipatory fear! Who ever heard of the earth being shaken without people becoming aware of it?

It seemed to him that the vibrations increased from hour to hour, and that the danger of a general fall of buildings became more imminent every minute. He was alone in the office,—there was not a soul to be seen in the street,—every one had left the village, to seek safety in the open plain. And his duty, as telegraph operator, forbade him to move!

Towards evening he closed the office, and went out into the plain himself. The people were standing about in groups, telling their beads and chanting litanies. When they saw him they were near falling upon him, as the cause of the mischief. Was it not he who had turned the whole village upside down, with that accursed pendulum of his? The whole scene had a depressing effect on him, however much he might try to keep up his courage, and convince his fellow-townsmen of the great benefits of his warning, which might, for all they knew, have been the saving of many lives.

But at noon on the following day nothing had yet happened.

Every quarter of an hour some one of the bravest came in from the country to the telegraph office, to find out how things were going. The pendulum still vibrated—but there were no news of the predicted earthquake.

The evening came. Not the ghost of an earthquake! A few here and there began to turn the thing into ridicule. The syndic—who had a head on his shoulders—had sent a boy to the Pietranera. When the boy returned with Pippo Corradi's answer, "It's all nonsense—make your minds easy!" there was an explosion of "Oh!—oh!—oh!" and those who had been most frightened, and felt that they had been made fools of, began to yell, "Imbecile! Blockhead! Idiot!"

They rushed in a tumultuous noisy crowd to the telegraph office; and had they not met with the lieutenant of the Carbineers, who had hastened up on receipt of a cipher telegram from the chief constable, who knows how the matter might have ended for Nino d'Arco?

"What on earth have you been doing?" said the lieutenant. "You have been disturbing the public peace."

Nino was petrified for a moment; then, seeking to excuse himself by proof positive, pointed to the pendulum.

"Well?" said the lieutenant.

"Look—it moves!"

"You must be seeing double. There is nothing moving here."

"Do look carefully."

"Allow me. . . . Nothing moving!"

In fact, the pendulum had stopped. Nino would not believe his own eyes.

"I confiscate it, for the present!" cried the lieutenant.

And, raising the glass of the case, he took out the tube in which the pedulum was fixed.

"When one is as ignorant as you, sir, . . . " Every one present applauded vigorously. "And I shall report the matter to headquarters."

To Nino it mattered nothing that the crowd should applaud and hiss, or that the lieutenant of the Carbineers should report him at headquarters. He was thinking only of Pippo Corradi, and how he would laugh behind his back when he heard it; and the tears stood in his eyes.

And, as though all this had not been enough, behold, on the following day, the following message clicked along the wires from Corradi:

"To-day, 2 P.M., upward shock of first degree lasting three seconds; followed, after interval of seven seconds, by undulatory shock, south-north, also first degree, lasting five seconds. No damage."

"Infamous fate!" stammered Nino d'Arco. And he shut off the current, to escape from the clicks which seemed to deride him.

LUIGI CAPUANA

QUACQUARÁ

POOR Don Mario ! No sooner was he seen coming round the corner with his rusty, narrow-brimmed, stove-pipe hat, nearly a foot high, and his overcoat with long tails fluttering in the wind, than everyone—first the boys, then the men, the loafers on Piazza Buglio, and even the gentlemen at the Casino—began to salute him, on every side, with the cry of the quail, "*Quacquarà ! Quacquarà !*" just because they knew that it enraged him.

He stopped and stood at bay, staring round, brandishing his great cudgel, and shaking his head threateningly. Then he would take two or three steps forward, looking fixedly at them, in order to discover one or other of the impudent wretches who so far forgot the respect due to him, the son and grandson of lawyers—to him who stood a hundred times higher than all those gentlemen of the Casino. . . . But in vain ! On the right hand and the left, before and behind, rose the shouts and whistles, "*Quacquarà ! Quacquarà !*"

"Don't excite yourself ! Let them shout !"

"If I do not kill someone, they will never be quiet !"

"Do you want to go to the convict prison for nothing ?"

"I will send them there !"

He became red as a turkey-cock, raving and gesticulating and foaming at the mouth.

"They would be quiet enough, if you did not get angry."

"They are cowards ! Why don't they come out like men, and say it to my face ?"

"*Quacquarà !*—"

"Ah ! would you hit a child ?" This time, if they had not stopped him, he would have broken the head of the barber's boy, who had boldly approached him near enough to utter the objectionable cry under his very nose. There was trouble enough before Don Mario would let himself be dragged away into the chemist's shop, which was filled with a laughing crowd. Vito, the chemist's young man, came forward, very seriously, and said to him :

"What does it matter if they *do* say *Quacquarà* to you ? You don't happen to be a quail, do you ?"

Don Mario turned furious eyes on him.

"Well; it's not as if they called you a thief!"

"I am a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman."

"Well? What does *Quacquarà* mean? Nothing at all. *Quacquarà* let it be!"

The chemist and the others present were writhing in convulsions of suppressed laughter at the serious countenance of Vito, who, under the pretext of lecturing Don Mario for his folly, kept on repeating the quail's cry to his very face, without his perceiving that it was done on purpose.

"Now I," said he, "if a man were to cry *Quacquarà* after me, I would give him a halfpenny every time. *Quacquarà! Quacquarà!* Shout yourselves hoarse, if you like!"

"And, meanwhile, you scoundrel, you're repeating it to my face," yelled Don Mario, as he raised his cudgel, perceiving at last that he had been made a fool of. At this point the chemist, who was terrified for the safety of his plate-glass windows, thought it time to interfere; and, taking his arm, drew him out of the shop, condoling with his grievances, and soothing his ruffled feelings as well as he could.

"Come out this way; no one will see you."

"Am I to hide myself? To please those louts? I am a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman!"

True—very true! The Majori had always been respectable people, son succeeding father in the notary's office from generation to generation, up to the year 1819; in which year there issued forth from the infernal regions that judgment of Heaven called the Code Napoléon, specially created for the despair of the notary Majori, Don Mario's father, who never could understand it, and was forced to retire from his profession.

"What? No more Latin formulas? . . . And documents to be headed 'In the King's Name'! But what has His Majesty the King to do with private contracts?"

And he relieved his conscience by having no more to do with the whole business. And so the ink had dried up in the great brass inkstand in his office, and the quill pens were all worn out; and the quiet in the house contrasted strangely with the bustle there had been formerly, when everyone came to consult him, for he was honesty in person, and never set down on the papers a single word more or less than the interested parties wished. And thus Don Mario, who had hitherto acted as clerk in his father's office, and knew by heart all the Latin formulas, without understanding a syllable thereof, found his occupation gone. So did his brother Don Ignazio, who was not much more capable than himself; and after the old notary had died of a broken heart, on account of that unholy

Code which had no Latin formulas, and insisted on having documents headed *In the King's Name*, the two brothers eked out a sordid livelihood on the little they inherited from him. But they were proud in their honourable poverty, and rigidly faithful to the past, even in their dress, continuing for a time to wear their old clothes, carefully brushed and mended, regardless of the fact that they were out of fashion and excited ridicule.

Don Ignazio, however, could not stand it long. When his beaver hat seemed to him quite useless, and his overcoat too threadbare, he bought a second-hand hat for a few pence from Don Saverio, the old clothes dealer, and a coat which had also been worn already, but presented a better appearance than his old one. Don Mario, on the other hand, stood firm, and went about in his rusty tall hat and long coat of half a century ago, shabby and darned, but without a spot. He was not going to derogate from his past—he, the son and grandson of notaries.

Then came hard times,—bad harvests,—the epidemic of 1837,—the cholera,—the revolution of '48 ;—and the two brothers passed disagreeable days and still more unpleasant nights, racking their brains for the means of procuring a glass of wine for the morrow, or a little oil for the salad or the soup.

"To-morrow I will go to So-and-so," Don Mario would say. "Meanwhile we must sweep out the house."

They did everything themselves ; and while Don Ignazio cut up an onion to put into the evening's salad, Don Mario, in his father's indoor coat, all faded and mended, began carefully to sweep the rooms like a housemaid. He dusted the rickety tables and the old ragged, leather-covered arm-chairs ; and then, having gathered up all the dirt into a basket, he would cautiously open the door, to make sure there was no one within sight, and, late at night, carried it out and deposited it behind the wall of a ruined house which had become the dust-bin of the neighbourhood.

And on the way he would pick up stones, cabbage-stumps, bits of orange or pumpkin-peel, so as to clean up the street also, seeing that no one troubled about it, everyone being too much occupied with his or her own business to pay any attention to cleanliness. Cleanliness was his fixed idea—indoors and out. It often happened that Don Ignazio, finding that he was late in coming home, was forced to go out and call him in to supper.

"You are not the public scavenger, are you ? "

"Cleanliness is a commandment of the Lord ! " Don Mario would reply.

And, having washed his hands, he sat down to the meagre supper of onion salad and bread as if it had been the daintiest of dishes.

"This is Donna Rosa's oil ; and do you know there is no more

left ? " said Don Ignazio one evening between two mouthfuls.

" To-morrow I will go to the Cavaliere ! "

" But his father was a peasant farmer ! "

" His grandfather was a day labourer ! "

" And now he is made of money ! "

" His grandfather became the Prince's agent—and made his fortune."

" Let us go to bed ; the light is going out."

They had to economise even their candles. But afterwards, in the dark, the interrupted conversation was continued—not very consecutively—from one bed to another.

" Have you see the band in their new uniforms ? "

" Yes. . . . Farmer Cola has got in a hundred bushels of grain this year."

" Who knows if it is true ? Much good may it do him ! "

" To-morrow I will go to the Cavaliere for some oil. . . ."

" The wine is all gone, too."

" I will go for the wine as well. . . . *Ave Maria !* "

" *Pater Noster !* " And so they went to sleep.

In the morning, after carefully brushing his shabby and much mended coat and his rusty hat, Don Mario dressed hastily and began his day by going to mass at San Francesco. . . . This ceremony over, he proceeded on his errand, hugging the oil-flask tightly under his coat.

He presented himself with humble and ceremonious courtesy.

" Is the Cavaliere at home ? "

" No, but his lady is."

" Announce me to the lady."

Now all the domestics in the place knew perfectly well the meaning of a visit from Don Mario, and at most houses they would leave him to wait in the anteroom, or say to him without more ado :

" Give me the bottle, Don Mario "

It often happened that while they were filling it for him he could not control himself at the sight of the disorder in the room where they left him. He would mount a chair in order to remove, with the end of his stick, the cobwebs clustering on the ceiling ; and if he found a broom within reach of his hand—what was to be done ? he could not resist !—he began to sweep the floor, to dust the pictures or to pick up the scraps of paper or stuff scattered about.

" What are you doing, Don Mario ? "

" The Lord has commanded us to be clean. . . . Thank the lady for me ! "

Donnà Rosa, who was amused with him and his ways, always had him shown up to the drawing-room, and asked him to sit down.

" How are you, dear Don Mario ? "

"Well, thank God. And how is your Excellency?"

"As well as most old women, dear Don Mario!"

"None are old but those that die. Your Excellency is so charitable that you ought to be spared for a hundred years to come."

Donna Rosa kept up the conversation as though she had no idea of the real object of this visit; and Don Mario, still hugging his bottle, awaited the favourable moment for presenting his request without appearing troublesome. From time to time, after wriggling on his chair, as if in pain, for a few minutes, he would rise, and with "Excuse me, my lady!" wipe the dust from a table, or stoop to pick up a flake of wool, or bit of thread from the floor, and throw it out of the window,—as though the sight of these things actually made him feel ill.

"Oh! never mind, Don Mario!"

"The Lord has commanded us to be clean. . . . I had come. . ."

"How does your brother like his new employment?" Donna Rosa interrupted him, one day.

"Very much indeed."

"You ought to try and get appointed inspector of weights yourself. There is one wanted at the Archi mill."

"But the addition, madam! the addition! Ignazio knows how to do it!"

He turned up his eyes, with a sigh—as if this arithmetical process were a most complicated calculation.

"Poor Ignazio!" he went on "He comes back from the mill so tired! Just imagine, madam—four miles uphill, on foot! . . . I had come for this. . . ."

And he produced the flask.

"With pleasure!" Who was there that could say "No" to Don Mario?

But when that unfortunate addition was mentioned, not even the gift of a bottle of wine could restore him to good humour. He had tried so many times to do an addition sum. The tens were the difficulty.

"Nine and one are ten. . . . Very good! . . . But . . . put down nought and carry one. . . . Why carry one if there are ten?"

He had found it utterly impossible to understand this. And yet he was no fool. You should have heard him read, quite correctly, all those old legal documents, with their strange Latin abbreviations, which the modern notaries and advocates could not succeed in deciphering. It is true that he recited them parrot-fashion, without understanding them; but all the same he could earn half a franc at a time when required for this service; and this meant two *litres* of wine and half a *kilo* of lamb—quite a festive meal, although, nowadays, with Don Ignazio's position, the two brothers were not

quite so badly off as before.

They would even have been happy if it had not been for the irritating behaviour of the street boys. One day matters reached a crisis. Don Mario, administering a cuff to an ill-conditioned fellow who assaulted him with the cry of *Quacquarà*, received the same back with interest, and got his coat torn into the bargain. The magistrate, before whom the case was brought, kept the vagabond under arrest for a couple of hours, and got up a subscription at the Casino, to present Don Mario with a new coat and hat. But the latter would never consent to be measured for it, and when the coat—cut out by guess-work—was sent him, together with the most spick and span of hats, he thanked the donors politely, and sent the whole back.

"You have been a fool!" said his brother, who, on his return from the mill that evening, found him intent on repairing his ancient garment. "You can't go out again in that"

"I shall stay at home," replied Don Mario loftily.

And he was no longer seen about the town.

He passed his days sitting on the front doorstep, talking to the neighbours, or wandering through the many empty rooms of the dilapidated house. No repairs had been undertaken for years past; the shutters were loose on their hinges. Two floors had given way, and had to be passed by means of planks, laid like bridges from one room to another; and the tiles were off the roof in many places, so that some of the upper rooms were flooded when it rained.

"Sell half the house," said one of the neighbours; "it is much too large for you two alone!"

But that evening, discussing the matter at supper, Don Mario and Don Ignazio found themselves greatly embarrassed.

"Sell! Easily said. . . . But what? The room that had been their father's office?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Don Mario indignantly.

It is true that the big volumes, bound in dark leather, were no longer in the shelves all round the walls. The government had taken possession of them, as though they had been its property, and not that of the notaries, who had drawn up all those documents. But what matter? The shelves, moth-eaten and rickety, reduced to receptacles for dishes, frying-pans, and utensils of all sorts, remained, to their eyes, living witnesses, as it were, to past glories. The two brothers looked at one another.

"Was it possible? . . . Well. . . . What *should* they sell? Their grandmother's room?"

A mysterious chamber, which had been kept locked for seventy years, and of which now even the key was lost. Their grandfather's wife—a saint, on earth—had died there, and the widower had

ordered it to be shut up, in sign of perpetual mourning. Every night the mice kept up a terrible racket there. But what matter? A master notary—one of the Majori—had willed that no one should open it and no one had done so. Were *they* to profane it? They were both agreed . . . it was impossible!

"What then? The portrait-room?"

There were arranged on its walls half-a-dozen canvases, blackened with years and smoke, on which you could make out—here, the severe profile of Don Gasparo Majori, 1592; there, the grey eyes, white moustache, and pointed beard of Don Carlo, 1690; beside it, the wig and round shaven face of Don Paolo, 1687; and farther on, the lean and narrow head of Don Antonio, 1805, framed in an enormous collar, with white neckcloth, and showy waistcoat with watch-chain and seals dangling from its pockets. Don Mario knew by heart the life, death, and miracles of each one, and so did Don Ignazio.

Could they turn them out of their own house? No; it was impossible. Better let the whole fall into ruins.

They went to bed and put out the light.

"Well, it will last our time. We are old, Mario!"

"You are two years older than I!"

" . . . To-morrow, Notary Patrizio is coming to get an old deed read out to him."

"So we shall be able to buy half a *kilo* of meat."

"Saverio the butcher cheats in his weights. I shall keep my eyes open."

"I have lent the rolling-pin to Comare Nina."

"I will get the wine from Scatá. . . . Vittoria wine this time.

. . . *Pater Noster*!"

"*Ave Maria*!"

So they went to sleep.

They were growing old. Ignazio was right.

Don Mario sometimes wondered which of the two would die first, and the thought left him sad and depressed.

"I am the younger. . . . But, after me, the house will go to distant relatives, . . . they will divide it up and sell it. . . . But, after all, what does it matter to us? We shall both be gone then. . . . We are the real Majori; when we are dead, the world is dead!"

Yet he went on sweeping out the tumble-down old house with the same tenderness and care as ever, removing the cobwebs from the walls, and dusting the moth-eaten and ragged remnants of furniture; driving a nail into the back of a chair or the leg of a table; pasting a sheet of oiled paper in the place of a missing window-pane, and carrying out the dust and rubbish as usual, late at night.

Moreover, since he now frequently went to sleep in the daytime—with the loneliness, and having nothing to do—he sometimes passed the night out of doors, sweeping the whole length and breadth of the street, and pleased to hear the wonder of the neighbourhood next morning, and have people say to him :

“ The angel passed by last night. Is it so, Don Mario ? ”

He would smile, without replying. He was now quite resigned to his voluntary imprisonment, as he could no longer wear his old coat and hat, which were still there, quite spotless and free from dust, though perfectly useless.

One day, however, Don Mario lost all his peace of mind.

Standing at a window in the portrait-room, he had been looking along the street at Reina's house, with its fantastically-sculptured gateway and the twisted stone monsters.

“ A fine palace—quite a royal one,” said Don Mario, who had never seen anything richer or more beautiful in his life.

“ Yet, how was it the proprietor had never noticed those tufts of pellitory growing between the carvings over the arch of the great gateway, quite spoiling the building ? It was a sin and a shame ! ”

Scarcely had Don Ignazio come home from the mill that evening, tired and out of breath, when his brother said to him :

“ Look here ; you ought to go to Signor Reina. He is letting nasty weeds grow between the carvings of the gateway, under the middle balcony. It quite worries one to see them.”

“ Well ? ”

“ You ought to tell him of it—at least when you meet him again.”

“ I will tell him.”

Don Ignazio, quite worn out with his long walk, had other matters to think of ; he wanted to have his supper and go to bed.

But from that day he too got no peace. Every evening, when he came home, Don Mario never failed to ask him, even before he had laid aside his stick : “ Have you spoken to Reina ? ”

“ No.”

“ Go and tell him at once. It is a pity ; those weeds are spoiling the building.”

They were quite an eyesore to him ; he could not make out how Reina could put up with such a sacrilege. And several times a day he would go to the attic window, mounting a pair of steps at the risk of his neck, in order to look out. Those weeds were always there ! They grew from day to day ; they made great bushes that waved in the wind. If they had been fungous growths in the interior of his own system, he could not have suffered more from them.

“ Have you told Reina about them ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What did he say ? ”

"He swore at me."

That night Don Mario never closed his eyes. As soon as he found that his brother was snoring, then he lit the lamp, dressed himself, took the steps on his shoulder, which they nearly dislocated, and made his way to Reina's house, keeping in the shadow of the wall, and avoiding the moonlight, as if he had been a burglar.

As indeed the gendarmes thought him when they came upon him, perched on the top of the gateway, pulling away for dear life at the parasitic herbs, in spite of the proprietor, who did not care whether they grew there or not.

"What are you doing up there?"

"I am pulling out these weeds."

"Come down."

"Let me finish."

"Come down, I tell you!"

At this unceremonious summons poor Don Mario had to descend, leaving several bushes of pellitory to spoil the beautiful building unchecked. . . .

They were nearly taking him off to the police station! . . . And all for a good action! He died within three months, with the nightmare of those weeds weighing on his heart. . . . Poor old Don Mario!

GIOVANNI VERGA

1840-

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

AFTER Turridu Macca, Mistress Nunzia's son, came home from soldiering, he used to strut every Sunday, peacock-like, in the public square, wearing his rifleman's uniform, and his red cap that looked just like that of the fortune-teller waiting for custom behind the stand with the cage of canaries. The girls all rivalled each other in making eyes at him as they went their way to mass, with their noses down in the folds of their shawls; and the young lads buzzed about him like so many flies. Besides, he had brought back a pipe with the King on horseback on the bowl, as natural as life; and he struck his matches on the back of his trousers, raising up one leg as if he were going to give a kick.

But for all that, Master Angelo's daughter Lola had not once shown herself, either at mass or on her balcony, since her betrothal to a man from Licodia, who was a carter by trade, and had four Sortino mules in his stable. No sooner had Turridu heard the news than, holy great devil! but he wanted to rip him inside out, that was what he wanted to do to him, that fellow from Licodia. However, he did nothing to him at all, but contented himself with going and singing every scornful song he knew beneath the fair one's window.

"Has Mistress Nunzia's Turridu nothing at all to do," the neighbours asked, "but pass his nights in singing, like a lonely sparrow?"

At last he came face to face with Lola, on her way back from praying to Our Lady of Peril; and at sight of him she turned neither white nor red, as though he were no concern of hers.

"It is a blessing to have sight of you!" said he.

"Oh, friend Turridu, I was told that you came back around the first of the month."

"And I too was told many other things besides!" he answered.

"So it is true that you are going to marry Alfio the carter?"

"If such is the will of God!" answered Lola, drawing together beneath her chin the two corners of her kerchief.

"You do the will of God by taking or leaving as it pays you best!"

And it was the will of God that I should come home from so far away to hear such fine news, Mistress Lola ! ”

The poor fellow still tried to make a show of indifference, but his voice had grown husky ; and he walked on ahead of the girl with a swagger that kept the tassel of his cap dancing back and forth upon his shoulders. It really hurt the girl to see him with such a long face, but she had not the heart to deceive him with fair words.

“ Listen, friend Turridu,” she said at length, “ you must let me go on to join the other girls. What would folks be saying if we were seen together ? ”

“ That is true,” replied Turridu ; “ now that you are to marry Alfio, who has four mules in his stable, it won’t do to set people talking. My mother, on the other hand, poor woman, had to sell our bay mule and that little bit of vineyard down yonder on the highroad during the time that I was soldiering. The time is gone when the Lady Bertha span ; and you no longer give a thought to the time when we used to talk together from window to courtyard, and when you gave me this handkerchief just before I went away, into which God knows how many tears I wept at going so far that the very name of our land seemed forgotten. But now good-bye, Mistress Lola, let us square accounts and put an end to our friendship.”

Mistress Lola and the carter were married ; and on the following Sunday she showed herself on her balcony, with her hands spread out upon her waist, to show off the big rings of gold that her husband had given her.

Turridu kept passing and repassing through the narrow little street, with his pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, pretending indifference and ogling the girls ; but inwardly he was eating his heart out to think that Lola’s husband had all that gold, and that she pretended not even to notice him as he passed by.

“ I’d like to take her from under his very eyes, the dirty dog ! ” he muttered.

Across from Alfio’s house lived Master Cola, the vine-grower, who was rich as a porker, so they said, and had an unmarried daughter. Turridu said so much, and did so much, that Master Cola took him into his employ ; then he began to haunt the house and make pretty speeches to the girl.

“ Why don’t you go and say all these fine things to Mistress Lola ? ” Santa answered him.

“ Mistress Lola is a big lady ! Mistress Lola is wife of one of the crowned heads now ! ”

“ I suppose I am not good enough for the crowned heads.”

“ You are worth a hundred such as Lola ; and I know one fellow who would never so much as look at Mistress Lola or her patron saint

when you are around. For she isn't fit to carry your shoes for you, indeed she isn't ! ”

“ When the fox found that he couldn't reach the grapes——”

“ He said, ‘ how lovely you are, you sweet little grape ! ’ ”

“ Oh ! come, hands off, friend Turridu.”

“ Are you afraid I am going to eat you ? ”

“ No, I am not afraid of you nor of him you serve.”

“ Ah ! your mother was from Licodia, we all know that. Your blood boils quickly ! Oh ! I could eat you up with my eyes ! ”

“ Then eat me up with your eyes, and leave no crumbs ; but meanwhile pick up that bundle of twigs for me.”

“ For your sake I would pick up the whole house, that I would ! ”

To hide her blushes, she threw at him the fagot she happened to have in her hands, but for a wonder missed him.

“ Cut it short ! Talking doesn't bind fagots.”

“ If I was rich, I should be looking for a wife just like you, Santa ! ”

“ I shall not marry a crowned head, as Mistress Lola did ; but I shall have my dower, as well as she, when the Lord sends me the right man.”

“ We know that you are rich, yes, we know that ! ”

“ If you know so much, then stop talking, for my father will soon be here, and I don't care to have him catch me in the courtyard.”

The father began to make a wry face, but the girl pretended not to notice, for the tassel of the rifleman's hat had set her heart-strings quivering and was for ever dancing before her eyes. After the father had put Turridu out of the door, the daughter opened her window to him, and would stand chatting with him all the evening, until the whole neighbourhood could talk of nothing else.

“ I am crazy about you,” Turridu would say ; “ I am losing my sleep and my appetite.”

“ I don't believe it ! ”

“ I wish I was the son of Victor Emanuel, so that I could marry you ! ”

“ I don't believe it ! ”

“ By our Lady, I could eat you up, like a piece of cake ! ”

“ I don't believe it ! ”

“ On my honour ! ”

“ Oh, mother mine ! ”

Lola, listening night after night, hidden behind a pot of sweet basil, turning first pale and then red, one day called down to Turridu : “ How is it, friend Turridu, that old friends no longer greet each other ? ”

“ Alas ! ” sighed Turridu, “ blessed is he who may greet you ! ”

"If you care to give me greeting, you know where my home is," answered Lola.

Turridu came back to greet her so often that Santa took notice of it, and closed her window in his face. The neighbours pointed him out with a smile or a nod of the head when he passed by in his rifleman's uniform. Lola's husband was away, making a circuit of the village fairs with his mules.

"On Sunday I mean to go to confession, for last night I dreamt of black grapes," said Lola.

"Wait a while! wait a while!" begged Turridu.

"No, now that Easter is so near, my husband would want to know why I have not been to confession."

"Aha!" murmured Master Cola's Santa, waiting for her turn on her knees before the confessional where Lola was washing herself clean of her sins. "On my soul, it is not to Rome I would send you to do penance!"

Friend Alfio came home with his mules and a pretty penny of profit, and brought his wife a present of a fine new dress for the holidays.

"You do well to bring her presents," his neighbour Santa said to him, "for while you are away your wife has been trimming up the honour of your house!"

Master Alfio was one of those carters who wear the cap well down over one ear, and to hear his wife talked of in this fashion made him change colour as though he had been stabbed. "Holy big devil!" he exclaimed, "if you have not seen aright, I won't leave you eyes to weep with, you and your whole family!"

"I have forgotten how to weep!" answered Santa; "I did not weep even when I saw with these very eyes Mistress Nunzia's son, Turridu, go in at night to your wife's house."

"Then it is well," replied Alfio; "many thanks to you."

Now that the husband was home again, Turridu no longer wasted his days in the little street, but drowned his sorrow at the tavern with his friends; and on Easter eve they had on the table a big dish of sausage. When Master Alfio came in, just from the way he fastened his eyes upon him, Turridu understood what business he had come on, and laid his fork down upon his plate.

"How can I serve you, friend Alfio?" he asked.

"Nothing important; friend Turridu, it is some time since I have seen you, and I wanted to talk with you of the matter that you know about."

Turridu had at once offered him a glass, but Alfio put it aside with his hand. Then Turridu arose and said to him: "Here I am, friend Alfio."

The carter threw an arm around his neck.

"If you will come to-morrow morning down among the prickly pears of Canziria, we can talk of this affair, friend Turridu."

"Wait for me on the highroad at sunrise, and we will go together."

With these words they exchanged the kiss of challenge. Turridu seized the carter's ear between his teeth, and thus solemnly bound himself not to fail him.

The friends had all silently withdrawn from the dish of sausage, and accompanied Turridu all the way to his home. Mistress Nunzia, poor woman, was accustomed to wait for him late every night.

"Mother," said Turridu, "do you remember when I went away to be a soldier, and you thought that I was never coming back! Give me a kiss, such as you gave me then, for to-morrow I am going on a long journey!"

Before daybreak he took his clasp-knife, which he had hidden under the straw at the time he went away as a conscript, and started with it for the prickly pears of Canziria.

"Holy Mother, where are you going in such a rage?" sobbed Lola in terror as her husband started to leave the house.

"I am not going far," answered Alfio, "but it will be far better for you if I never come back."

Lola, in her night-gown, prayed at the foot of her bed, and pressed to her lips the rosary which Fra Bernadino had brought her from the Holy Land, and recited all the Ave Marias that there were beads for.

"Friend Alfio," began Turridu after he had walked quite a bit of the way beside his companion, who remained silent, with his cap drawn over his eyes, "as true as God Himself, I know that I am in the wrong, and I ought to let you kill me. But before I came here, I saw my old mother, who rose early to see me start, on the pretext that she had to tend the chickens; but her heart must have told her the truth. And as true as God Himself, I am going to kill you like a dog, sooner than have the poor old woman weeping for me."

"So much the better," replied Master Alfio, stripping off his jacket, "strike your hardest, and so will I."

They were both worthy foes. Turridu received the first thrust, and was quick enough to catch it on his arm. When he paid it back, he gave good measure, and aimed for the groin.

"Ah, friend Turridu, you have really made up your mind to kill me?"

"Yes, I told you so; ever since I saw my old mother going out to feed the chickens, her face floats all the time before my eyes."

"Then open your eyes wide," Alfio called to him, "for I am going to square accounts with you."

And as he stood on guard, crouching ever, so as to hold his left

hand upon his wound which was aching, and with his elbow almost touching the ground, he suddenly caught up a handful of dust and threw it into his opponent's eyes.

" Oh ! " howled Turridu, " I am done for ! "

He sought to save himself by making desperate leaps backward ; but Alfio overtook him with another blow in the stomach and a third in the throat.

" And the third is for the honour of my house, that you made free with. Now, perhaps, your mother will forget to feed her chickens."

Turridu stumbled about for a moment, here and there among the prickly pears, and then fell like a log. The blood gurgled in a crimson foam out of his throat, and he had no chance even to gasp out, " Oh, mother mine ! "

GIOVANNI VERGA

THE SHE-WOLF

SHE was tall and lean ; her breast alone revealed the firmness and vigour of the brunette type ; and yet she was no longer a young woman. She was pallid, as though she always had the burden of malaria upon her ; and in the midst of that pallor two such great eyes and lips so fresh and ruddy that they seemed to devour you alive.

In the village they called her the She-Wolf, because she was never satiated—never with anything. The women all made the sign of the cross when they saw her pass by, with the skulking, prowling tread of a starving wolf ; for she made clean pickings of their sons and husbands with those rosy lips of hers, drawing them on behind her skirts merely with one glance of those eyes like the devil's own, even though they had been standing before the altar of St. Agrippina herself. Fortunately the She-Wolf never went herself to church, neither on Easter nor on Christmas, neither to hear mass nor to confess herself. Father Angiolino, of the Church of St. Mary of Jesus, a true servant of God, had lost his soul for her sake.

Maricchia—poor little thing !—a good and honest lass, wept in secret, because she was the daughter of the She-Wolf, and no one would take her to wife, even if she had had her share of fine things in a chest and her bit of good land in the sunshine, like every other lass in the village.

Once on a time the She-Wolf fell in love with a handsome lad who had just come home from soldiering and was mowing the hay beside her in the fields of the notary ; fell in love in the full sense of the term—love that sets the flesh on fire beneath a fustian jacket and makes you feel, when glances meet, a thirst like that which comes to you during the hot hours of June in the middle of an open pasture. But the lad continued tranquilly to mow, with his nose close down to his task, and would say to her :

“ What is the matter with you, Mistress Pina ? ”

In the silence of those vast fields, broken only by the whirring flight of the grasshoppers, when the sun beat down upon them like lead, the She-Wolf kept on steadily binding bundle after bundle, sheaf after sheaf, never wearying, never for a moment straightening

up to relieve her back, never pausing to moisten her lips, but keeping ever close upon the heels of Nanni, who mowed and mowed, and time and again would ask her :

"What is it that you want, Mistress Pina ? "

One evening she told him what, while the men were dozing on the threshing floor, weary from a long day's labour, and the dogs were howling in the blackness of the vast open country. "It is you that I want ! You who are splendid as the sun and as tempting as honey ! It is you I want ! "

"And I, on the contrary, want your daughter ; the heifer, not the cow," retorted Nanni, with a laugh.

The She-Wolf left him like a hunted thing, with her hands in her hair, tearing at her temples without speaking a word, and roamed away to be seen no more at the threshing floor. But in October she saw Nanni again, because he was working alongside of her home, and the creaking of the oil press kept her awake all the night.

"Take the bag of olives," she said to her daughter, "and come with me."

Nanni was sending the olives by the shovelful into the machine and crying "Go along !" to the mule, to keep it from stopping.

"Do you still want my daughter Maricchia ? " Mistress Pina demanded.

"What have you to give to your daughter Maricchia ? " retorted Nanni.

"She has what her father left her, and besides that I will give her the house. It is enough for me if you leave me a corner in the kitchen and a little straw to sleep on."

"In that case we can talk of it at Christmas," said Nanni.

He was all greasy and foul with oil and with the olives that had begun to ferment, and Maricchia did not want him at any price. But her mother dragged her by the hair before the hearthstone and told her, between clenched teeth :

"If you don't take him, I will kill you ! "

The She-Wolf was really ill, and people began to say that when the devil grows old he turns hermit. She no longer went prowling hither and thither ; she no longer lurked in her doorway, staring out with her devil-haunted eyes. Her son-in-law, whenever he felt those eyes of hers fixed upon him, would try to laugh and would pull out his little scapular of the Madonna, to cross himself with it. Maricchia now stayed at home to nurse her babies, and her mother went forth into the fields to work beside the men, precisely like a man, weeding, spading, driving the cattle, pruning the vines, indifferent to the east winds of winter or the sirocco of August, the days when the mules

droop their heads limply and the men sleep open-mouthed on the north side of the wall.

" 'Twixt nones and vespers, in the gloaming,
No honest woman goes a-roaming,"

and Mistress Pina was the solitary living soul to be seen wandering across the country along the heated stones of the narrow lanes or through the parched stubble of the immense fields that melted away in a shimmering haze, far, far away toward nebulous Etna, where the sky sank to sleep on the horizon.

"Wake up!" the She-Wolf commanded Nanni, who was sleeping in the ditch beside the dust-laden hedge, with his head between his arms. "Wake up, for I have brought you a wine that will slake your thirst."

Nanni stared up with misty eyes, halfway between sleeping and waking; then finding her before him, erect and pallid, with swelling breast and eyes black like coals, he stretched out his arm uncertainly toward her. Then:

"No, no!"

" 'Twixt nones and vespers, in the gloaming,
No honest woman goes a-roaming,"

sobbed Nanni, hiding his face against the dried grass of the ditch, as deep as he could, with his nails in his hair. "Take yourself off, take yourself off! Never come here again to the threshing floor!"

She took herself off, indeed, the She-Wolf, twisting up her superb tresses and looking down fixedly at her footsteps in the parched stubble, with her eyes black like coals.

But to the threshing floor she came back, time and time again, and Nanni ceased to tell her nay; and when she was late in coming between nones and vespers, in the hour of gloaming, he would go and wait for her, at the top of the little lane, white and deserted, with the sweat upon his brow—and afterward he would bury his hands in his hair, and repeat to her over and over:

"Take yourself off, take yourself off! Never come back again to the threshing floor!"

Maricchia was weeping night and day, but whenever she saw her mother coming back from the fields, always pallid and mute, she would insolently face her down, with eyes scorching with tears and jealousy, a veritable she-wolf's whelp herself.

"You vile beast!" she would say. "You vile beast of a mother!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"You thief! Oh, you thief!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"I'll bring the police; yes, I will!"

"Bring them then!"

And she really did go and bring them, with her children in her arms, fearless and dry-eyed, like a madwoman, because now, at last, she too loved this husband whom they had given her by force, all foul and greasy with the olives that had been put to ferment.

They summoned Nanni to the police-court and threatened him with the galleys and the scaffold. Nanni broke down and sobbed and tore out the hair of his head. He denied nothing, he attempted no sort of excuse.

"It is the temptation," he kept saying, "the temptation of hell itself!"

He cast himself at the feet of the official, begging to be sent to the galleys.

"Out of charity, Signor Officer, take me away from the hell I live in! Tell them to kill me or lock me up in prison; but don't let me see her again—never, never again!"

"No!" was the She-Wolf's decision, when the official argued with her. "I reserved a corner of the kitchen to sleep in, when I gave her my house as a dower. The house is mine. I won't get out of it!"

Not long after Nanni was kicked in the chest by a mule, and was like to die; but the parish priest refused to bring him the sacrament unless the She-Wolf left the house. The She-Wolf did leave the house, so that her son-in-law could prepare to make an end, even he, in good Christian fashion. He made confession and received communion with such sighs of repentance and contrition that all the neighbours and curious idlers began to weep around the bed of the dying man. And better would it have been for him to die at that time, before the devil returned to tempt him and take possession of him, body and soul, when he was well again.

"Leave me in peace!" he kept saying to the She-Wolf. "Out of charity, leave me in peace! I have looked death straight in the eyes! And there is poor Maricchia, half mad with despair. And now the whole land knows about it. The less I see of you, the better it is for you and for me."

And it would have been well for him to tear out his eyes, so as not to see those of the She-Wolf; for whenever her eyes looked into his they destroyed him, body and soul. He no longer knew what to do next, to free himself from the spell she cast. He paid mass after mass for the souls in purgatory, and went to seek aid from the parish priest and from the police. At Easter he went to confession and publicly did penance on the holy paving stones in front of the church. And then, when the She-Wolf returned to tempt him,

"Listen!" he said to her. "Never come again to the threshing floor, because if you come again to seek me, as truly as there is a God I will kill you like a beast!"

"Kill me like a beast," replied the She-Wolf, "for all I care. But without you I do not care to live."

And when he saw her coming, from far off, across the budding green of new-sown fields, he paused from pruning the vines and went to take down his scythe from where it hung upon the elm. The She-Wolf saw him come to meet her, pallid and staring-eyed, with his scythe that gleamed in the sun; yet she never shrank back a single step nor lowered her glance, but came steadily toward him, her hands full of great bunches of red poppies, her black eyes devouring him alive.

"May your soul go straight to hell!" said Nanni brokenly.

GIOVANNI VERGA

THE WAR OF THE SAINTS

ALL of a sudden, while Saint Rocco was quietly proceeding on his way, under his baldachin, with a number of wax candles lit all round him, and the band, and the procession, and the crowd of devout people—there came a general helter-skelter, tumult, and confusion worse confounded. There were priests running away, with the skirts of their cassocks flying wildly, drummers and fifers upset on their faces, women screaming, blood flowing in streams, and cudgels playing even under the very nose of the blessed Saint Rocco. The Prætor, the Syndic, the Carbineers all hastened to the spot ;—the broken bones were carried off to the hospital,—a few of the more riotous members of the commuuity were marched off to pass the night in prison,—the saint returned to his church at a run rather than a processional step,—and the festival ended like the comedies of Pulcinella.

And all this through the spite of the people in the parish of Saint Pasquale. That year the pious souls of Saint Rocco had been spending the very eyes out of their heads in order to do things in grand style ;—they had sent for the band from town,—they had let off more than two thousand squibs,—and they had now got a new banner, all embroidered with gold, which, it was said, weighed over a quintal, and tossed up and down in the midst of the crowd, like a wave crested with golden foam. Which thing, by sheer contrivance of the Evil One, was a thorn in the sides of the followers of Saint Pasquale,—so that one of the latter at last lost patience, and began, pale as death, to yell at the top of his voice, “ *Viva San Pasquale !* ” Then it was that the cudgels began to fly.

Because, after all, to go and cry “ *Viva San Pasquale* ” in the very face of Saint Rocco, is really a good, sound, indisputable provocation ; —it is just like going and spitting in a man’s house, or amusing yourself by pinching the girl who is walking arm-in-arm with him. In such a case there is no longer any sense of right and wrong,—and that slight amount of respect which people still have for the other saints—who, after all, are all related to each other—is trampled under foot. If it happens in church, seats are flung into the air,—if during a procession, there are showers of torch-stumps like

swarms of bats, and at table the dishes fly.

"*Santo diavolone !*" cried Compare Nino, panting, heated, and dishevelled. "I'd like to know who has the face to cry *Viva San Pasquale* again !"

"I!" yelled Turi the tanner, who looked forward to being his brother-in-law, quite beside himself with rage, and nearly blinded by a chance blow received in the *mêlée*. "*Viva San Pasquale* till death !"

"For the love of Heaven ! for the love of Heaven !" shrieked his sister Saridda, throwing herself between her brother and her betrothed. All three had been going for a walk in all love and good fellowship up to that moment.

Compare Nino, the expectant bridegroom, kept crying in derision, "Long live my boots—*viva San Stivale !*"

"Take that !" howled Turi, foaming at the mouth, his eyes swollen and his face like a tomato. "Take that for Saint Rocco, you and your boots ! There !"

In this way they exchanged blows which would have felled an ox, till their friends succeeded in separating them by dint of cuffs and kicks. Saridda, who by this time had grown excited on her own account, now cried *Viva San Pasquale*, and was very nearly coming to blows with her lover, as if they had already been husband and wife.

At such times parents quarrel most desperately with their sons and daughters, and wives separate from their husbands, if by misfortune a woman of the parish of Saint Pasquale has married a man from Saint Rocco.

"I won't hear another word about that man !" cried Saridda, standing with her hands on her hips, to the neighbours, when they asked her how it happened that the marriage had not come off. "I won't have him, if they give him to me dressed in gold and silver from head to foot ! Do you hear ?"

"Saridda may stay where she is till she turns mouldy, for all I care !" said Compare Nino, in his turn, as he was getting the blood washed from his face at the public-house. "A parcel of beggars and cowards, over in the tanner's quarter ! I must have been drunk when it came into my head to look for a sweetheart over there !"

"Since it is this way," had been the Syndic's conclusion, "and they can't carry a saint out into the square without sticks and fighting, so that it's perfectly beastly,—I will have no more festivals, nor processions, nor services ; and if they bring out so much as one single candle—what you may call a candle—I'll have them every one in gaol."

In time, the matter became important ; for the bishop of the

diocese had granted to the priests of Saint Pasquale the privilege of wearing copes. The parishioners of Saint Rocco, whose priests had no copes, had even gone to Rome to raise an outcry at the foot of the Holy Father, carrying with them documents on stamped paper, and everything else ; but all had been in vain, for their adversaries of the lower town—who, as every one remembered, had once been without shoes to their feet—had now grown as rich as Jews, through this new industry of tanning. And, in this world, one knows that justice is bought and sold like the soul of Judas.

At Saint Pasquale they were awaiting Monsignor's delegate, who was a person of importance, and had silver buckles on his shoes weighing half a pound apiece—and a fine sight they were to see—and he was coming to bring the copes to the canons. And for this reason, they, in their turn, had now sent for the band, and they were going to meet Monsignor's delegate three miles outside the town ; and it was said that in the evening there were to be fireworks in the square, with *Viva San Pasquale* over and over again, in letters as big as those on a shop-front.

The inhabitants of the upper town were therefore in a great ferment ; and some, more excited than others, were trimming certain staves of pear and cherry wood, as big as clothes-props, and muttering—

"If there is to be music, we shall want to beat time !"

The Bishop's delegate ran a great risk of coming out of his triumphal entry with broken bones. But the reverend gentleman was cunning enough to leave the band waiting for him outside the town, while he, taking a short cut, quietly walked to the parish priest's house, whither he summoned the principal men of the two parties.

When these gentlemen found themselves face to face—after all this time that the feud had lasted—each man began to look into the whites of his neighbour's eyes, as if he could scarcely keep his nails out of them ; and it required all the authority of his Reverence—who had put on his new cloth soutane for the occasion—to get the ices and the other refreshments served without accidents.

"That's right !" said the Syndic approvingly, with his nose in his glass. "When you want me for the cause of peace, you'll always find me on the spot."

The delegate, in fact, said that he had come for the sake of conciliation, with the olive-branch in his mouth, like Noah's dove, and made his exhortation, distributing smiles and hand-clasps all round, and saying, "Gentlemen, will you do me the favour of coming into the sacristy to take a cup of chocolate on the day of the festival ?"

"Do leave the festival alone !" said the Vice-Prætor ; "if not, more mischief will come of it."

"Mischief will come of it if this tyranny is to be allowed—if a

man is not to be free to amuse himself as he likes, and pay for it with his own money ! ” exclaimed Bruno, the carter.

“ I wash my hands of the matter. The orders of the Government are explicit. If you celebrate the festival I shall send for the Carbineers. I am for order.”

“ I will answer for order ! ” said the Syndic, tapping the ground for emphasis with his umbrella, and looking slowly around.

“ Bravo ! as if we did not know that it is your brother-in-law Bruno who blows the bellows for you in the Town Council ! ” retorted the Vice-Prætor.

“ And you have joined the opposition party only on account of that bye-law about the washing, which you can’t get over ! ”

“ Gentlemen ! gentlemen ! ” entreated the delegate. “ We shall do nothing if we go on in this way.”

“ We’ll have a revolution, that we will ! ” shouted Bruno, gesticulating with his hands in the air.

Fortunately the parish priest had quietly put away the cups and glasses, and the sacristan had rushed off at the top of his speed to dismiss the band, who, having heard of the delegate’s arrival, were already hastening up to welcome him, blowing their cornets and clarionets.

“ In this way we shall do nothing at all ! ” muttered the delegate, worried to death by the thought that the harvest was already ripe for cutting in his own village, while he was wasting his time here talking to Compare Bruno and the Vice-Prætor, who were ready to tear one another’s souls out. “ What is this story about the prohibition of the washing ? ”

“ The usual interference. Nowadays one can’t hang a handkerchief out of the window to dry without getting fined for it. The Vice-Prætor’s wife—feeling safe because her husband was in a position of trust, for till now people always had some little regard for the authorities—used to hang out the whole week’s washing—it was not much to boast of—on the terrace. . . . But now, under the new law, that’s a mortal sin ; and now even the dogs and fowls are prohibited, and the pigs—saving your presence—that used to do the scavenging in the streets ; and now the first rain that comes it will be Heaven’s mercy if we don’t all get smothered in the filth. The real truth is that Bruno, the assessor, has a grudge against the Vice-Prætor, on account of a certain decision he has given against him.”

The delegate, in order to conciliate the local mind, used to sit boxed up in his confessional, like an owl in its nest, from morning till evening, and all the women were eager to be shriven by the Bishop’s representative, who had powers of plenary absolution for all sorts of sins, just as though he had been Monsignor in person.

“ Your Reverence,” said Saridda, with her nose at the grating,

"Compare Nino makes me commit sin every Sunday in church."

"In what way, my daughter?"

"He was to have married me, before there was all this talk in the place; but now that the marriage is broken off, he goes and stands near the high altar, and stares at me, and laughs with his friends, all the time holy mass is going on."

And when his Reverence tried to touch Nino's heart, the countryman replied—

"No, it is she who turns her back on me whenever she sees me—just as if I were a beggar!"

He, on the other hand, if Gnà Saridda passed across the square on Sundays, gave himself airs as if he had been the brigadier, or some other great personage, and did not even seem to see her. Saridda was exceedingly busy preparing little coloured paper-lanterns, and put them out in a row on the window-sill, in his very face, under the pretext of hanging them out to dry. Once they found themselves together in church, at a christening, and took no notice of each other, just as though they had never met before; nay, Saridda even went so far as to flirt with the godfather.

"A poor sort of a godfather!" sneered Nino. "Why the child's a girl! And when a girl is born, even the beams of the roof break down!"

Saridda turned away, and pretended to be talking to the baby's mother.

"What's bad does not always come to do harm. Sometimes, when you think you've lost a treasure, you ought to thank God and Saint Pasquale; for you can never say you know a person till you have eaten seven measures of salt."

"After all, one must take troubles as they come, and the worst possible way is to worry one's self about things which are not worth the trouble. When one Pope's dead they make another."

"It's fore-ordained what sort of natures children are to be born with, and it's just like that with marriages. It's far better to marry a man who really cares for you and has no other ends to serve, even though he has no money or fields, or mules or anything. . . ."

On the square the drum was beating to give notice of the festival.

"The Syndic says we shall have the festival," was the murmur that went through the crowd.

"I'll go to law till doomsday, if it should leave me as poor as holy Job, with nothing left but my shirt; but that five francs' fine I will not pay! not if I had to leave directions about it in my will!"

"Confound it all!" exclaimed Nino. "What sort of a festival are they going to have, if we are all to die of hunger this year?"

Since March not a drop of rain had fallen, and the yellow corn, which crackled like tinder, was "dying of thirst." Bruno, the

carter, however, said that when Saint Pasquale was carried out in procession it would rain for certain. But what did he care about rain ? or all the tanners of his neighbourhood either ? In fact they carried Saint Pasquale in procession to east and to west, and set him upon a hill to bless the country on a stifling May day, when the sky was covered with clouds,—one of those days when the farmers are ready to tear their hair before the burnt-up fields, and the ears of corn droop as if they were dying.

“ A curse on Saint Pasquale ! ” cried Nino, spitting in the air, and rushing about among his crops like a madman. “ You have ruined me, Saint Pasquale ; you’ve left me nothing but the reaping-hook to cut my throat with ! ”

The upper town was a desolate place enough. It was one of those long years when the hunger begins in June, and the women stand at their doors with their hair hanging about their shoulders—doing nothing—staring with fixed eyes. Gnà Saridda, hearing that Compare Nino’s mule was to be sold in the public square, to pay the rent of his farm, felt her anger melt away in an instant, and sent her brother Turi in hot haste, with the few *soldi* they had put aside, to help him.

Nino was in one corner of the square, with his eyes averted and his hands in his pockets, while they were selling his mule, with all its ornaments and the new headstall.

“ I don’t want anything,” he replied sullenly. “ My arms are still left me, please God. A fine saint that Saint Pasquale of yours, eh ? ”

Turi turned his back on him, to avoid unpleasantness, and went on his way. But the truth is that people’s minds were thoroughly exasperated, now that they had carried Saint Pasquale in procession to east and west, with no more result than that. The worst of it was that many from the parish of Saint Rocco had been induced to walk with the procession too, thrashing themselves like asses, and with crowns of thorns on their heads, for the sake of their crops. Now they relieved their feelings in exceedingly bad language ; and the Bishop’s delegate was obliged to leave the town, as he entered it, on foot, and without the band.

The Vice-Prætor, by way of retaliation on his opponent, telegraphed that people’s minds were excited, and the public peace compromised ; so that one fine day a report went through the town that the soldiers had arrived, and every one could go and see them.

“ They have come on account of the cholera,” others said, however. “ Down in the city, they say, the people are dying like flies.”

The chemist put up the chain of his shop door, and the doctor left the place as speedily as possible, to escape being knocked on the head.

"It will not come to anything," said the few who had remained in the place, having been unable to fly into the country like the rest. "The blessed Saint Rocco will watch over his own town."

Even the lower town folks had begun to go barefoot to Saint Rocco's church. But not long after that, deaths began to come thick and fast. They said of one man that he was a glutton, and died of eating too many prickly pears, and of another, that he had come in from the country after nightfall. But, in short, there was the cholera, there was no disguising it,—in spite of the soldiers, and in the very teeth of Saint Rocco,—notwithstanding the fact that an old woman in the odour of sanctity had dreamed that the saint himself had said to her :

"Have no fear of the cholera, for I am looking after that. I am not like that useless old ass of a Saint Pasquale."

Nino and Turi had not met since the mule was sold ; but scarcely had the former heard that the brother and sister were both ill, than he hastened to their house, and found Saridda, black in the face, and her features all distorted, in a corner of the room. Her brother, who was with her, was recovering, but could not tell what to do for her, and was nearly beside himself with despair.

"Ah ! thief of a Saint Rocco," groaned Nino. "I never expected this. Gnà Saridda, don't you know me any more ? Nino, your old friend Nino."

Saridda looked at him with eyes so sunken that one had to hold a lantern to her face before one could see them, and Nino felt his own running over.

"Ah ! Saint Rocco," said he, "this is a worse trick than the one Saint Pasquale played me !"

However, Saridda in time got better, and as she was standing at the door, with her head tied up in a handkerchief, and her face yellow as new wax, she said to Nino : "Saint Rocco has worked a miracle for me, and you ought to come too, and carry a candle at his festival."

Nino's heart was too full to speak, and he nodded assent. But before the festival came round, he too was taken with the pestilence, and lay at the point of death. Saridda tore her face with her nails, and said that she wanted to die with him, and she would cut off her hair and have it buried with him, and no one should ever look her in the face again as long as she lived.

"No, no," replied Nino, his face all drawn with agony. "Your hair will grow again, but it will be I that will never see you again, for I shall be dead."

"A fine miracle that Saint Rocco has worked for you !" said Turi, by way of comforting him.

Both of them slowly recovered ; and when they sat sunning them-

selves, with their backs to the wall and very long faces, kept throwing Saint Rocco and Saint Pasquale in each other's teeth.

One day Bruno, the carter, coming back from the country after the cholera was over, passed by them, and said :

" We're going to have a grand festival to thank Saint Pasquale for having saved us from the cholera. We shall have no more demagogues and no more opposition, now that the Vice-Prætor is dead. He has left the quarrel behind him in his will."

" All very well ; a festival for the dead ! " sneered Nino.

" Perhaps it was Saint Rocco that kept you alive ? "

" There !—do have done with it ! " cried Saridda. " If you don't, we shall need another cholera to make peace between you ! "

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

1842-1911

THE SILVER CRUCIFIX

"YOUR coffee, milady," said the maid.

The Countess did not reply. But although the curtains were closed, her handsome young face could be dimly discerned on the white pillow. The maid, standing tray in hand at the foot of the bed, repeated more loudly :

"Your coffee, milady."

The Countess sat up, while she yawned, with eyes still unopened, "Let in some light."

Her maid went to the window without putting down the tray, and, in turning the handle of the shutters, managed to knock over the empty cup on its saucer.

"Keep quiet!" whispered the mistress in a tone of irritation. "What is the matter with you this morning? Don't you see you are waking the baby?"

And as a matter of fact the infant was now awake and crying in its crib. The lady turned toward the child's bed, and peremptorily called out "Hush!"

This silenced her offspring at once, excepting for a few faint moans.

"Now, then, I will have my coffee," commanded the Countess. "Have you seen your master yet? Why, you are trembling all over! What is the matter with you?"

What, indeed, ailed the girl? Cup, saucer, sugar-bowl, and coffee-pot were rattling on the tray. "What is it?" repeated the Countess.

If the maid's face showed signs of alarm, no less was the mistress disturbed by doubts and fears.

"Nothing," replied the servant, still trembling.

The Countess hereupon seized her by the arm, shook it roughly, and exclaimed :

"Tell me!"

Meanwhile the pretty little head of a child of four was peering over the edge of the crib.

"It's a case," said the maid, half in tears, "it's a c' observed one of Pale as death, the lady started up, and instinctively and mattress her listening son. She jumped out of bed ; by a single gesture imposed silence on the girl, while motioning her to go into a room. Then she darted to her child's crib. "tment.

The little fellow had begun to cry again, but his mother kissed and petted him, played and laughed with him until he forgot 'l of woes, and stopped weeping. She pulled on her dressing-gown in great haste, and joined the servant, shutting the door behind her.

"Oh, my God, my God!" lamented the girl between her sobs, while the other woman too began to shed tears.

"Hush, for Heaven's sake! On no account must baby be frightened! What about this case—where is it?"

"Here, milady! Rosa, the steward's wife. She was taken ill at midnight."

"Heavens! And now—?"

"She is dead. She died half an hour ago."

The baby was shrilly clamouring for his mother.

"Go," said the Countess; "go in and play with him. Keep him happy; do anything you like. Be quiet, darling!" she exclaimed. "I shall be back in a moment." Upon which she rushed to the Count's room.

The lady was blindly, insanely afraid of the cholera; nothing but her passion for her child could have been more intense than this feeling. At the first rumours of the epidemic she and her husband had fled the city, escaping to their splendid country seat—her marriage portion—in the hope that the disease would not spread thither. The place had been spared in 1836, and had even remained untouched in 1886. And now there it was, in the farmyard attached to the villa.

Dishevelled and untidy, she flew into her husband's room. Before speaking she gave two violent tugs at the bell-rope.

"Have you heard?" she said, with flaming eyes.

The Count, who was phlegmatically shaving his beard, turned round, inquiring, with the soapy brush in his hand: "What?"

"Don't you know about Rosa?"

"Oh, yes, I know," was his calm response.

If, in the first place, the Count had cherished some vague illusion that his wife was ignorant of Rosa's death, it now also seemed proper to reassure her by his cool demeanour. Instead, however, her ladyship's eyes shot fire, and her features were savage with anger.

"What!" she shouted, "you know, and you can think of nothing better to do than shave? What sort of man are you—what sort of father—what sort of husband?"

"Good Lord!" cried the Count, throwing up his arms.

the poor man, soaped up to the eyes, and wrapped in a towel, could add another word, in came the valet. The ship commanded that not a peasant from the farmyard be admitted to the house, and that no one should go thence to the farmyard. After this she gave orders for the coachman to be ready within an hour; he must harness to the landau the horses which his lordship would select.

"What are you going to do?" asked the latter, who had recovered himself meanwhile. "Nothing rash, I must insist."

"*Rash*—how dare you say that? I am willing to be obedient to you in everything, but when it comes to a question of life and death—my son's life, you understand—then I will listen to no parley from anyone. I wish to leave here at once. Order the horses, please."

The Count grew annoyed. How could matters have come to such a pass as this? Was there any propriety in running away after such a fashion? And then, what about business affairs? In two days, or one day, or maybe in twelve hours, he would be ready to start. But not before—no. His wife, however, interrupted him violently. "Propriety, indeed, and business! For shame!"

"And clothes?" objected the husband. "We must certainly take some with us. You see, we shall really need more time."

The Countess made some contemptuous answer. She would see to it, she assured him, that the trunks were packed in an hour.

"But where do you expect to go?" persisted the Count.

"To the railway station, first of all, and then wherever you like. Now order the horses."

"I have had enough of this!" cried the other. "I'll give such orders as I choose! I'll let the business affairs go, and everything else! Your clothes, too! The sorrels," he added, enraged, to the domestic who was standing by impassively.

The Countess dressed and did her hair with the utmost speed, at moments clasping her hands in silent prayer, distributing commands, summoning servants from various parts of the house by frantic pulls at the bell. There was running up and down stairs, banging of doors, shouting, laughing, calling out of names, suppressed swearing. All the windows facing the fatal farmyard were immediately closed. Thus the cries of the unfortunate children who had lost their mother were shut out; besides a disagreeable odour of chlorin had penetrated into the villa, and even into the Countess's room, smothering the delicate Viennese perfume she habitually used.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed angrily, "now they are doing their best to ruin everything! Pack up quickly, and get those trunks locked! This frightful smell is enough to kill one! Don't they know that chlorin has no effect? They ought to burn the things. The steward will be dismissed if any thieving goes on."

"Some things are being burnt already, milady," observed one of the maids. "The doctor is having sheets, coverlid, and mattress burnt."

"That's not enough!" snapped the Countess.

Here the Count, shaved and dressed, entered his wife's apartment. He began talking to her aside.

"What shall we do with these servants? We can't take all of them with us."

"Anything you please. Send them away. Nothing will be safe in the house if they remain. I don't want them to get the cholera, and then fumigate the rooms with that vile chlorin, and perhaps burn up some of my best gowns. They have no respect whatever for their master's property, and—"

Furious at having yielded, the Count now broke in with:

"A pretty state of things! A shame, I tell you, a scandal, to sneak off like this!"

"That's it!" retorted the woman. "That's just how you men always are! To appear strong and courageous is more important to you than the life and safety of your family. You are afraid of becoming unpopular. Well, if you want to keep up your reputation, why don't you send for the mayor, and present him with a hundred lire for the cholera patients of the place?"

He thereupon suggested that he would stay at the villa alone, and that she should go with the child. Only he had not enough stability to carry out his own idea.

During this conversation the trunks were being filled. The little boy's playthings, his most expensive apparel, prayer-books, bathing-suits, jewellery, crested notepaper, furs, underlinen, many superfluous and few necessary articles were thrown in helter-skelter, and the lids closed down by sheer force. Then the Countess, followed by her spouse—who made a great show of activity, but really accomplished nothing—hurried through the whole house opening drawers and cupboards, taking a last look into them, and locking them up with their own hands. The Count stated his opinion that it might be advisable to partake of some refreshment before commencing the journey.

"Yes, yes!" ironically said his consort, "we'll take some refreshment! I'll show you what to take!"

And she drew up her husband and all the servants, including those who were going home for a holiday, and dosed each one with ten drops of laudanum. Her son she regaled with some chocolates.

At last the landau stood before the door. Prior to actually departing, her ladyship, who was extremely pious, withdrew to the seclusion of her bedchamber for a final prayer. Kneeling at a chair, in her tight-fitting costume of white flannel, her black, eight-button

gloves reaching to the elbows, and her gold and platinum bracelets, she raised her eyes devoutly to heaven—under the overshadowing plume of her black velvet hat—and murmured a feverish supplication. Not a word did she say to God about the poor wretches who had lost their mother ; nor did she ask that the cholera might spare the humble workers chained to the rich soil which had given her this house, her jewels, clothes, Viennese perfume, her education, her dignity, her husband and child, her accommodating God. Neither did she ask for anything for her own person. She, who already saw herself and her family smitten down with the dread disease on the journey, offered up no prayers excepting for her son. In fact, her lips simply muttered *Paters* and *Aves* and *Glorias*, while her mind was altogether with the child, thinking of the fearful fate which might befall him, of the danger to his health in this precipitate journey, of his possible loss of appetite, sleep, spirits, or colour. Oh, if he could but be kept unconscious of any peril or pain assailing others !

Rapidly she crossed herself, donned a long, grey cloak, and shut a window that had remained open. Before the strong morning breeze clouds were chasing across the sky, the grass was bending on the lawn, and the tall poplars were swaying in the avenue leading to the villa. But the Countess, though brought up on family traditions, had no thought for reminiscences of her youth belonging to this country estate. She merely closed the window and went downstairs.

The mayor was conversing with his lordship by the carriage door.

"Have you just come from there ?" she asked the official, and, being informed that he had come from his home, she upbraided him for not having kept off the epidemic. He excused himself with polite smiles, to which the lady confusedly replied : "Never mind, then ; never mind," as she hastened her child into the vehicle.

"Did you give him the money ?" she whispered to her husband as soon as she was seated beside him. He made a sign in the affirmative.

"I should like to thank her ladyship, too," began the obsequious mayor, "for the generosity with which——"

"Oh, it was nothing—nothing !" interrupted the Count, scarcely knowing what he said.

Established in the carriage, the Countess made a rapid survey of bags and boxes, coats and shawls, umbrellas and parasols. Her husband in the meantime turned round to see if all the luggage was in its place in the barouche, which had been fastened on behind to the landau. "But," he suddenly remarked, "what is the matter with that little boy ?"

"Yes, who is that crying ?" excitedly called out the Countess, leaning far out of the carriage.

"All ready!" exclaimed the peasant who had been assisting the servants with the luggage, and to whose side clung a small, ragged urchin. "Stop, can't you?" his father bade him, sharply, then repeating the words, "All ready!"

The Count, with his eye on the boy, plunged into one of his pockets. "Don't give way, my boy; you shall have a soldo all to yourself."

"Mother is ill," whined the lad sorrowfully; "mother has the cholera."

Up jumped the Countess. Her face livid and contorted, she brought down her folded sunshade across the coachman's back:

"Drive on!" she shrieked; "drive on—quick!"

The menial whipped up the horses. They began to prance, and then went off at a gallop. The mayor barely had time to leap out of the way, and his lordship to fling out a handful of coppers, which scattered on the ground at the peasant's feet. He stood motionless—while the boy continued weeping—and stared after the flashing wheels of the carriage that rolled swiftly away, whirling up the dust.

"Damn those rich pigs!" he said.

Pretending not to hear, the mayor discreetly departed.

The peasant, a man of middle age and stature, pale, meagre, evil-looking, and as rugged as his offspring, made the youngster pick up the coins. Then they went home together.

They inhabited, in the yard belonging to one of the Countess's farmhouses, a tumble-down, unplastered brick hovel, situated between a dunghill and a pigsty. Before the door gaped a dark ditch, from which issued an indescribable stench, and which was bridged by a single rough plank. Upon entering, one found oneself in a dingy, unpaved sort of cavern. There was no flooring, either wood or stone, but there was an irregular brick fireplace, and in front of it the ground had been depressed by poor wretches kneeling to cook their mess of cornmeal. A wooden stair—three steps missing—conducted to the room, foul with dirt and rubbish, where father, mother, and son were wont to pass the night in a single bed. Standing by this article of furniture, one might look down into the kitchen below through the broken boards. The bed occupied the only spot not soaked by the rain that dripped from the roof.

Crouching on the floor, her head leaning against the edge of the bed, sat the peasant's cholera-stricken wife. Although but thirty, she looked old; at twenty she had been a blooming girl, and even now preserved remnants of mild beauty. At the first glance her husband understood; he swallowed an imprecation. The child, frightened by his mother's discoloured face, kept in the doorway.

"For Christ's sake, send him away," she moaned feebly. "I

have the cholera ; send him away. Go to your aunt's, dear. Take him away, and send me the priest."

"I'll go," said the man to her ; and to the boy, motioning toward the farmyard gate, " You go to your aunt's."

From the porch of the yard he fetched an armful of straw, carried it into the kitchen, and went upstairs to his wife, who by exerting all her strength had contrived to get on the bed.

"Listen," said the man, in accents of unusual tenderness ; " I am sorry, but if you die in the bed it will have to be burnt. You understand, don't you ? I have brought some straw into the kitchen—a nice lot."

Too weak to answer, she made a mute signal of assent, and then a faint effort to rise from her couch. But the man took her up in his arms. By a gesture she begged him to reach first for a small silver crucifix hanging on the wall ; she pressed it fervidly to her lips while her husband carried her down to the kitchen. Here he made her as comfortable as he could on the straw, before going for the priest.

And now she, too, this poor creature lying alone like a beast in a cage on the already infested straw—she, too, before departing to an unknown world, began to pray. She prayed for the salvation of her soul, convinced that she was guilty of many sins, and tormented by her inability to remember them.

When the timid doctor, sent by the mayor, arrived, he asked in great fright whether there was any rum or marsala in the house. There was neither ; so he recommended hot bricks for her stomach, put up a notice of quarantine, and left her. The priest, who knew no fear, carelessly reeled off what he termed " the usual things," obscuring the divine message with words of his own. Nevertheless, though benighted and ignorant, the dying woman derived comfort and serenity therefrom.

His task done, the priest went. Meanwhile the husband had put a few more handfuls of straw under her back, and lit the fire to heat the bricks. His wife went on praying—less for her child than for the man whom she had pardoned so often, and who was embarked on the road to perdition. Finally, kissing the cross, her mind turned to its giver. She had received it sixteen years back, at her confirmation, from the Countess, the mistress of the splendid manor where it was a joy to live and of the wretched hovel where it was a joy to die. At that time the Countess was a young girl, and had presented the silver crucifix to the labourer's daughter at the suggestion of her mother, then mistress of the estate, a kind, gentle lady, long dead, but unforgotten by her humble tenants.

The dying woman acknowledged having thought ill of the new mistress, of having complained sometimes, so that *her* husband had cursed because, despite repeated petition, neither *roof*, nor *flooring*,

nor staircase had ever been repaired, and because the window frames had not been filled with linen panes. Feeling truly penitent, in her heart she implored forgiveness of his lordship and her ladyship ; and she besought the Holy Virgin to bless them both.

At the moment when her husband placed the scorching bricks on her stomach, a spasm ran through her body, and she gave up the ghost. The man flung some straw over her blackening face, wrenched the little cross out of her hand, stuffed it into his pocket with a scowl at its small value, mumbling some customary pious sentiment the while.

But he did not say, for he did not know, and we do not know, how much good this poor woman's crucifix had done, invoked and kissed by her on so many occasions. Still less can we tell how much benefit may yet spring from that charitable thought of an old lady, descending to an innocent child, and afterward reascending as a prayer from a pure heart to the Throne of Infinite Mercy.

The same evening the servants at the villa, who had been given leave of absence during the journey of the Count and Countess, got drunk in the drawing-room on rum and marsala.

MARIO PRATESI

1842—

DOCTOR PHCEBUS

MANY years ago a company, with capital to back it, took a lease of the manganese mines in the province of Valle Amana. Perhaps the "Pleasant Valley" may at one time have deserved its name; but nowadays there is nothing pleasant about the monotonous barren hills, of no use to any one but the goats, and the distant woods, too scanty to lend any tint of green to the dry and desert landscape. The company's employes were scarcely to be blamed for not liking the place; everything was scarce, even pretty faces—at least such as had had the benefit of soap and water. But the pay was good, and more than one among them had hopes of becoming a shareholder or at least cashier; and so things went on somehow or other. Two hundred navvies pushed the work rapidly forward, and enormous trucks full of the grey metal blocked the postal road day and night.

But all that glitters is not gold; and one day the report spread that the flourishing company had failed, as though prosperity had undermined its foundations like stagnant water. It made a great talk in the neighbourhood, and every one concluded his or her comments by long exclamations of astonishment.

"*Mah!*" ejaculated the old, dried-up chaplain of the Charity Society, with his hands in the pockets of the threadbare shooting-coat which he always wore except when he put on his surplice to go and fetch the dead. "In my opinion it was just like when a set of people leave the gaming-table, where low cards have been dealt; but they do not all leave with the same advantages."

"There is no getting at the exact truth," remarked the landlord of the village inn, who did not repent nearly so much of his sin as he did of having given credit; "but in this business I too believe that the rogues have done the honest men who trust their neighbours, and never suspect any cheating."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Signor Vincenzino; and, perhaps he would have said more, only that, being syndic, and very rich, he thought it possible he might be risking the chance of a decoration. He rose from his seat in the Caffé del Giappone. "In any case," he

continued, keeping his back turned to the host, "there is the law."

"I'd like to see it!" replied mine host. "But it's very seldom that rogues who have grown rich do not find some one to help them, in one way or another, in keeping what they have stolen."

"Precisely!" retorted the chaplain, holding up his finger like Dante under the Uffizi. "There are certain experts and certain lawyers who show a most extraordinary ability in this respect, and acquire enormous credit, so that sometimes the Government is even forced to raise them to the rank of *Commendatore*. You alone, poor Phœbus . . ."

And so on, and so on. . . . It would be tedious to repeat all the conversation that took place at the Caffé del Giappone. As to Phœbus, however, I should not be altogether disposed to agree with the chaplain. If Phœbus found no one to make the best of the arguments on his side when—having been blinded by the effects of an explosion at the works—he asked for a miserable little pension, which the Company refused, saying that his misfortune was due to his own carelessness, and not to the necessities of his work,—if, I say, he had no one to plead his cause, this must be regarded merely as an accident, which happened to him, as it may happen to hundreds of others in a like condition. Then came the crash; and if a company were going to give every man what he wants, what motive could it have for declaring itself insolvent? In this case, to recommend the fulfilment of any humane duties is like running after a mist-wreath, or asking a routed army, in full retreat, to think of the dead and wounded they are leaving behind.

I do not deny that the consequences were certainly unpleasant for Phœbus, who had now eaten nothing for three days, and sat in the chimney-corner, yawning and stretching his arms to such an amazing extent, first in one direction, and then in another, that he looked like the castle of St. Angelo when the fireworks are being let off on Easter Day. A miserable hen, which sat motionless, not daring to attract attention to itself, and a cat which seemed to have nothing more to wish for in this life, having now reached the very utmost degree of leanness, and lay curled up, with half-closed eyes, on the dead ashes of the hearth, were the only creatures not audibly complaining in the melancholy darkness of the hut, which covered so much misery. It seemed as though they were meditating on the infinite vanity of things. But not so Phœbus's wife, nor Vittorino, his little son; for the one, by continual whimpering, and the other with her reproaches, added notes of sickening despair to the symphony of those sonorous, expansive, and well-nourished yawns of the blind man. Yet the wife had not the slightest reason for envying the cat; she was dry and thin as though she had nothing left for hunger and grief to gnaw at;—she was near her confinement,

poor soul, and, with her face the colour of sodden dead leaves, and her black eyes, greedy, feverishly bright, and sunken in their sockets, she was a very different person from the comely young Rosalinda whom Phœbus had married when he returned from serving in the *Bersaglieri*. That was six months before the accident at the quarries; and now she was more like one of the thirsty, dropsical wretches in Dante's "Malebolge."

"Go to Sor Vincenzino," said Phœbus.

His wife did not reply.

"Go to the doctor."

"Don't you know that a hundred poor sinners might die before either of *them* would stir a finger? Don't you know that the doctor keeps on asking me for a franc for that tooth he pulled out last year?"

Phœbus moved his jaws for a little while, like an animal chewing the cud; then he gave seven or eight more yawns, and rubbed his hands as if he had just concluded a good stroke of business.

"Go to Nannone—go to the chaplain, to the archdeacon, to Lisetta—only go to some one!"

"I went to Nannone this morning—he was not at home. I went to the chaplain yesterday, and he gave me that bread. I went to Lisetta the day before yesterday, and she gave me that *polenta*. And who's going to the archdeacon's, with that vixen of a Modesta there? Not I!"

"Then, you ugly slug, you cannot be hungry, and must just eat your own talk!"

The wife rose, sobbing and muttering curses, and went out, dragging the water-jar with her as usual, as an excuse for knocking at people's doors. When they opened, however, it was something more than permission to draw water at the well that she wanted—her errand was more serious than that.

To-day she did not find them disposed to listen to tales of misery, for it was the last day of the carnival, and the weather was bright and clear. A cold wind kept the sky cloudless, and the sun, going down in the west, seemed to embrace the whole sky and earth with its rays, and smiled among the shadows and on the peaks of the snowy Apennines, which gradually faded away into the distance on the last clear rim of the horizon. But the village, all but the great ruined tower on the little piazza, the upper part of which was still in light, began to grow dark; and it was already dusk in the ancient narrow streets, black as if after a conflagration, filled with crowds of country folk, among which the red shawls of the jolly peasant women made bright points here and there, and noisy with cymbals and other instruments, laughter, and shouting.

This, then, was not a propitious moment. In fact, Rosalinda was

not long in returning, with her pitcher and her hands both empty. The people, nearly all poor, were tired of her continual requests, and by this time the pitcher trick was becoming stale.

"Eh!" said her husband, rubbing his hands as usual. "I suppose they would not open their doors to you, because it is winter, and they are afraid of the cold coming in?"

"Be quiet!" screamed Rosalinda to the child. "Be quiet, or I'll make an end of you!"

"Be quiet, Vittorino," repeated Phœbus. "This evening we shall have twenty loaves and some roast meat! Wife! you be quiet too, and give me those things that ought to be in the box!"

The things were a heap of rags, on the top of which lay a worn-out tall hat, very old, but seeming still to remember its former owner; for to those who had never seen him in any other hat for years and years it was impossible not to be instantly reminded of that wrinkled, benevolent, patient face, whose serious sadness was rather added to than diminished by the somewhat long chin and Dantesque nose. The other things—a waistcoat, knee-breeches, and a very long black overcoat—had very evidently belonged to an extremely poor and unfortunate priest.

But Vittorino began to laugh and dance when he saw his father put on not only this Court suit, as it seemed to him, which his wife handed him, grumbling and crying at the same time, but a pair of huge horse-hair whiskers and an enormous paper collar, the point of which reached nearly to the tip of his nose.

Not only this, but a wave of merriment ran through the whole village, like the ripple which a puff of wind makes in the surface of the lagoon, when Phœbus issued from his door thus dressed, with a huge book containing the whole series of ancient medical prescriptions under his arm. Some people insisted on recognising in his icy smile, in those remedies so learnedly prescribed in his slow, pompous manner, in that awkward, straddling walk, Doctor Ambrogio, the village physician for forty years, who was also surgeon, veterinary surgeon, and dentist. As dentist his renown had attracted people from the remotest villages; and for the expense and trouble he had undergone to acquire it he expected compensation even from the poor, though in justice it must be said (and this shows Doctor Ambrogio's fair-mindedness), much less than from the rich.

Other masks made a cheerful variation in the crowd—*stenterelli*, with painted faces and pigtailed curled up like a point of interrogation, harlequins, Turks, madmen, wizards, and big, bearded creatures got up as nurses, and carrying turkeys swathed up in baby-clothes; which birds, pushing their red-wattled heads out from among the bandages, never imagined—though they seemed astonished and confused enough already—the slaughter which was to befall them

later on. The women, with bright eyes and laughing lips, hung over each other's shoulders, in the windows and on the balconies, to get a sight of Phœbus. Only when he began to give utterance to certain jokes at which no girl—and not even a married woman—can very well laugh in public, then they knitted their brows, while the men, looking at them, laughed fit to kill themselves. Then his popularity grew; then it seemed as though Plenty thought fit to empty her cornucopia over Phœbus; then the public liberality knew no limits, and down were showered steaks, and bread, and sausages, and dumplings, and pine-kernel buns, and boiled chestnuts, and pears and apples, and flat cakes, and rosemary cake, and millet puddings—all poured on the devoted head of Phœbus, who, without putting the smallest morsel into his mouth, stuffed the whole into the front of his waistcoat, into his hat, and into all the pockets of his overcoat and trousers.

Yet none the less did he continue to look like *Famine*, or *Lent* personified, come to play the fool in the midst of all that courteous and kindly merriment. The clumsy black spectacles—with the glasses broken and mended with black sealing-wax—with which he covered the horrible sight presented by his burnt eyes, seemed of themselves to darken him, and take away every touch of life and mobility from his worn face, white as old wax, which might have been taken for that of an old man or one far gone in consumption, if it had not been for the intensely black hair, and the figure, which, though below the middle height, was broad in the chest, and all muscles and sinews. If his hair had been white he would not have moved people's compassion so much as he did when they saw him still fresh and robust; for this his lot appeared peculiarly unjust and cruel, paralysing his strong arms, and robbing him of so many years of ease gained by hard labour, and reducing him instead to the necessity of asking alms, which were so limited, and not always kindly given. Nevertheless, on account of that habit he had of smiling and rubbing his hands when speaking, many people thought him a merry and light-hearted man who was fond of his joke.

The shouting crowd hustled him out on the little square, where rises the gloomy tower—at that moment lit up by the last rays of the sun, with the hawks wheeling, in the blue sky, round the top.

Doctor Ambrogio, standing at the door of the chemist's shop, looked like *Æsculapius* himself, with his ruddy, well-nourished face, full of severe learning, and his long white beard, under which appeared, wound several times round his neck, a heavy scarlet woollen scarf. If this physician, who was great at blood-letting and cupping, had remained a little behind the times, the chemist had by no means done so; and in this instance the old and the new genera-

tion joined hands. For the chemist, emulous of his city colleagues, had sold to a Florentine dealer in antiquities the phials and vases of glazed terra-cotta and the dried Nile crocodile, which, hanging with widely-opened jaws from the middle of the ceiling, had formerly given an uncanny idea of medical science and the apothecary's art, as though they had been devouring monsters. Moreover, he had decorated his shop with all the latest improvements—gilt boxes and ornamental stoppers, chalybeate water, and purgative syrups enclosed in cut-glass bottles; and he never sold an ounce of cream of tartar or bitter salts without doing it up in a little bag of glazed paper. All this elegance certainly raised the price of his commodities; but only consider how much it added to the efficiency of the drugs!

Here, right in front of this luxurious establishment, Phæbus stood still, in the midst of the crowd, opened his book, turned over the pages, and after discoursing for some time, concluded by prescribing Dr. Ambrogio, who was still standing in the doorway, and who suffered from sciatica, *a decoction of asinine cucumber*.

Dr. Ambrogio turned his back, closed the glass door, and said to Sor Vincenzino, who was seated on the sofa reading the paper: "This blind man is a public nuisance, and I cannot think why you don't get him out of the way. If I were syndic . . ."

"If you were syndic you would know what red-tape and difficulties and formalities are! Last year I tried to send him to the hospital for the blind at . . . and they sent him back because he was not a native of the place."

"Yes, I remember. I gave him as full a certificate as I could to get him away from here. Good heavens! If this town is not a nest of wretchedness, I don't know what is."

The chaplain, who was also in the shop waiting for the chemist, seemed touched to the quick, and said—

"It is the fault of the rich. If the rich were to think more about giving work——"

But the doctor interrupted him.

"Here we are with the rich again! Can't you understand, sir, that the rich have too many taxes?" The syndic nodded approvingly. "It's the Government that's in fault," said the doctor. "Here's the dilemma, and there's no getting out of it:—Either they ought to take off the income-tax, or they, and not we, should see to the feeding of these starving wretches."

"Very true! Just the thing I have so often thought," answered the syndic. "Because if they were to take off the income-tax, that sum would remain in the treasury; but it cannot remain there, because the funds have to be turned to account; and for doing this labour is needed, and labour being needed it has to be paid for, and being paid for, why, there you are. Then people have something to

eat ! Why, that's quite clear, gentlemen ! No difficulty in understanding that ! ”

“ There was no need for your explanation,” returned the chaplain, shrugging his shoulders with a slightly vexed look as he rose from the sofa, stretching out his legs, which appeared, long and thin as those of a blackbird, under the skirts of his wretched coat. “ Even the poor Countess paid income-tax ; yet at the end of the year she had spent a pretty large sum in good works. But her heirs have inherited her money and not her merciful heart.”

“ That is just the sort of speech you might be expected to make, belonging as you do to the Charity Society,” said the doctor, with a quietly contemptuous smile.

“ And a ruined man into the bargain ! ” whispered Sor Vincenzino into the doctor's ear. “ Later on, some time, I'll tell you a little story about his niece ”

“ Throwing away one's own money in that fashion,” the doctor went on, with a solemn air of wisdom, “ is not charity ; it is merely carrying out the whims of hysteria, and the Countess was hysterical from the tip of her great toe to the end of her hair. It's a question of organisation. You're far behind the times, chaplain ! ”

“ You had better take care. I may be in advance of you ! ”

“ Everything *may* be ; but that there ought to be methods and limits even in charity, for otherwise even great fortunes would fall into ruin, this indisputable and precious axiom of economic science, I am afraid—excuse me—you are not acquainted with. And with interest, you know, there is no joking.”

Sor Vincenzino concluded his approving nods by one of final and comprehensive assent ; and wishing to convey clearly to the chaplain that, in short, he thought nothing of him, he turned his back on him, and set himself, with a diplomatic countenance, to meditate over his newspaper. The chaplain understood that, and with his simple face full of grave sadness, and his white hair curling over his temples, remained standing, waiting patiently for the medicine for his poor, pretty niece, who was ill. The doctor kept looking out of the window, and saying to himself, “ I should like to know what has become of the police ! They ought to make an example and dismiss them both ! If I saw one of them I'd tell him to make that rascal hold his tongue ! ”

“ To-day I cure every one for nothing ! ” Doctor Phœbus was shouting in the midst of the crowd. “ To-morrow it will be too late ! Yes, it will be too late, unhappy people ! If you have not enough to live upon—if you do not pay me a proper fee for every visit—if you don't want to pay a high price for medicines, and buy them here of my good friend the chemist, who is the only man who sells good ones—why then, unhappy wretches, you can be no patients of

mine ! Then you will have to go to the hospital—our hospital !—where he who goes in never comes out any more ! What with fasting, and poultices, and gruel without salt, mallow-water and cuppings, in a week you will either be cured or gone where you want no more curing.”

At this point the last glimmer of the fiery sunset, the sound of the great church bell, and the rattle of a drum which was going round announcing the “ Last Wonderful Comedy of the Burattini,” distracted the audience. A man slipped out of the Caffè del Giappone, in the dusk, with baking-pan full of pastry, just out of the oven, and hastened to carry it to the Casino for the evening’s festivity. It was duly evident from all the going and coming that there were great things in the air. Not only at the Casino, but there was to be dancing at Sora Carmelinda’s and at Sor Gregorio’s ; there was to be dancing at the taverns, in the space between the wine-casks, and in the hay-lofts at the farms ; for all which occasions there had been secretly stored up in every house masks and half-masks and *papier-mâché* noses, in which one could be perfectly certain of not being recognised. Time was pressing ; the drum had ceased to beat and the bell to ring, and instead one could hear stray barrel-organs, to whose sound little companies of peasants came trooping in along the dark lanes ; and here and there, scattered through the streets of the merry little town, the shouting and laughter which had previously been all concentrated in the square. Then Phæbus found that he had been left alone, in a deeper darkness than before. He stretched out his numbed hands in order to give them a joyful rub ; but the long tight overcoat, now stuffed out with the bounty showered on him, got in his way ; he tried to stoop and to raise his arms, but this too was a failure. He was impatient to get home quickly, and instead of being able to do so he was forced to grope his way slowly along those noisy streets, where he could scarcely find room to set his stick down.

“ Wife ! Vittorino ! help ! I can get no farther ! Wife ! Come and help me unload the casks full of presents my patients have given me ! ” he began to shout when he was a few paces from the house.

His wife and Vittorino hurried to meet him, and relieved him of his load in a twinkling ; and having entered the house, all three ate like wolves, finding, moreover, here and there among the spoils, a piece of cod’s head or a rotten apple, flung for a joke, which were thankfully received by the cat and the hen, now awakened ; so provident is Nature.

Then, unluckily, Phæbus said to his wife, “ This evening, at least, dear, you are not going to complain ! ” Alas ! it was like putting the match to the powder-magazine. She had been quiet ; but the

words seemed to set her going afresh, and she began again—shrieks, tears, and lamentations ; how much reason she had for complaining, and how much for thinking of the next day, and how much better it would have been if she had always remained single.

Then Phœbus began, in good earnest, to blaspheme like a heretic, in the brutal Tuscan way. Yet, being quick-witted and kind-hearted beyond the average, he understood that such a burst of temper, after all anxiety had been removed by so abundant a supper, could only have been caused by the state of her health ; and he resisted the temptation of bringing her to her senses by a good beating. Instead of that, he shuddered, pitied her, and sat down comfortably in the chimney-corner without saying another word.

But poor little Vittorino, cheered by the unaccustomed supper, began to sing and jump about in that gloomy den, just like a bird which has seen the sun rise. Only the poor woman felt as if her nerves were being torn to pieces by the noise ; and she thought the child, young as he was, ought to have understood that there was cause rather for crying than laughing. Then he began to cry ; but that, also, would not do ; he was to be quiet and not let himself be heard in any way. The child obeyed with a sigh, and the mother then took him in her arms, soothing, petting, and kissing him. But these caresses of his mother's, who was sobbing after having beaten him (the blind man was singing to himself the whole time), could not draw a smile from him ; tired out and very serious, he fell asleep in her arms, and she laid him down on the ghastly mattress and stretched herself beside him. And after that there was nothing more to be seen or heard in the room. . . .

They were all asleep, even Phœbus, who loved sleep because it gave him back his liberty. By day, when he was awake, there was always a cloud surrounding him, and he fancied that he had to bore his way through it, as a mole bores through the ground, to find the sun he had lost. But that dark path went on and on, and never came to an end ; it was only in the darkness of night that he could even see the sun again, when he slept and dreamed that he was no longer blind, but could move about freely as before, with his eyes open and seeing. Then he saw them all again—not his little Vittorino, for the child had been born since his misfortune, and the father had never looked on his bright eyes and pretty features ; but his wife, and his parents, and his mates, and sometimes lovely distant landscapes that he had never seen before. . . . He had never had such beautiful dreams before he became blind. . . .

But that night he did not sleep sound, for a hand shook him roughly as he sat in the dark corner of the hearth, and recalled him to the reality of things—namely, to the belfry tower to ring the bells,

according to orders received from the archdeacon, from eleven o'clock to midnight, in order to announce the beginning of Lent, and warn people against breaking in on the fast and vigil.

At the command, then, of Phœbus, still masquerading as the doctor, two beggars, acting as his subordinates, who had already entered the tower and seized the bell-ropes, began bending their backs and rising again to the swing of the bells—a "double" so loud and eloquent in the gloomy silence as to reach even the most distant cabins, where some ancient oaks marked the boundary of the parish. But for a great many the bells tolled in vain. Nay, some masks even went and stood under the archdeacon's windows, making unseemly noises, howling and whistling with the intention of annoying him. And in some haylofts the young men, laughing at the remonstrances of the old and the continued tolling of the bells, kept up the dancing till daybreak, amid the smoke of the pipes and the sawing of the violins. The girls, it is true, were somewhat recalcitrant; but with a few scruples of conscience and a little remorse, they let themselves be whirled away, after a while, willingly enough.

After ringing for an hour, Phœbus, hearing the archdeacon's maid-servant call him from a window, entered, with his companion, the corridor of that dignitary's house, and having cautiously knocked at a door, was told to come in. They entered a large room lit by an old-fashioned brass lamp. Facing the door, at a little round table, smoking and sipping punch, after having finished their game at chess, sat the good archdeacon, a jolly man of portly presence, verging upon seventy; Cavalier Vincenzino, the syndic, with byelaws and civic enactments clearly written on the folds of his brow and the curves of his mouth; and the preaching friar, an elderly and hypocritical Franciscan, with red hair and a round face, who had arrived that very day to preach the Lenten sermons. When Phœbus and his companions entered, the friar hid his modest little pipe in his wide sleeve, and produced instead a snuff-box, from which he immediately offered a pinch to the syndic and the archdeacon, who readily accepted. The archdeacon, seeing Phœbus appear before him in that burlesque costume, and with that crushed and battered chimney-pot hat, threw back the tassel of his black skull-cap, which was dangling close to his left ear, and nearly choked himself with laughter. Modesta, the maid, who made a glorious entry, carrying a large dish of steaming meat-dumplings, hastened to set them down on the other table, which was ready laid in the middle of the room, so that she might scratch her head and laugh, like her master—or even louder and longer. This pleased neither the preaching friar nor the syndic, and they whispered together, looking deeply scandalised. 。

"*Persicomele!*" exclaimed the archdeacon, "are you going about masked after the stroke of twelve? And what sort of a costume might this be?"

"It is the costume of a doctor of medicine!"

"Dear archdeacon, my dear sir!" said the Franciscan, pointing at Phœbus, "this suit of clothes has belonged to a priest; do you not see the black stockings, the knee-breeches, the waistcoat? Archdeacon, it is not the proper thing to let the clothes of the clergy be seen in a masquerade."

"*Persicomele!*" exclaimed the archdeacon, looking more closely, as he passed his hand over his knees, as if dusting his breeches "Who gave you these clothes?"

"The chaplain!"

"Good! very good!" exclaimed the syndic, chuckling with delight, but he immediately resumed the calm, severe, and munificent aspect of the person who has to sign municipal edicts.

"It seems impossible that, at the present day, certain priests should have so little respect for their cloth!" said the Franciscan indignantly. "Fatal effects, my dear sir!..." And he took an enormous pinch of snuff, with both hands.

"You must not believe, reverend father," replied the syndic, with some heat, "that the chaplain gives the law to our commune, he is a——"

"Sir!" exclaimed the archdeacon.

"But you don't know——"

"I don't want to know. The chaplain is a priest, and that's enough! Find me another who for 260 francs will take the services of the Charity Society the whole year round, who will go ten or twelve miles on foot, in the depth of winter, or in the dog-days, to attend a funeral, and that with seventy years on his back! And then he has all his brother's family to keep—seven persons! But you were only joking, Cavalier!—so never mind, let it pass. . . . And as for you, you blind rascal, I must speak to you again about this. You had no business to go masquerading in these clothes, which were given you in charity. To-morrow, I shall tell the chaplain to take them away from you again!"

"What a pity!" thought Doctor Phœbus to himself; "I was going to make the overcoat into a nice jacket to wear only on feast-days!"

"But, to make a short story of it," resumed the archdeacon after some moments of anxious silence, "what did you come here for—eh?"

"We came to see whether it is time for the meat dumplings."

"The dumplings are on the table; sit down, therefore and eat."

"Fair and softly," exclaimed one of the guests a little later, giving Phœbus a tremendous nudge with his elbow.

"Blind man, you're going too fast!" cried the archdeacon, looking at him.

"May I lose my sight if I have eaten more than two!"

"Two!—you've eaten a dozen!"

"The blind man has a good appetite! Well, there's no harm—his teeth will stand it!" said Modesta, who was seated close by, counting the mouthfuls.

"Well then, Modesta, my dear," said Phœbus, "when his reverence says, 'Modesta, give the blind man a piece of bread and some meat, poor fellow!' why do you give me nothing but little dry crusts and cheese-parings? Do you take me for a mouse, Modesta?"

"Blind man, blind man, you are never satisfied!"

"Bless your reverence!" said Modesta, "it would take a great deal to satisfy him!"

"Nay, 'twould take little enough. I would be quite content if I had the sight of my eyes again."

"Good luck to you!" exclaimed the syndic at last, after having for some time looked on in admiring silence at the process of mastication and deglutition. "The like of us would be dead in three days if they ate in that fashion!"

"Just try a little abstinence!" said Doctor Phœbus. "Try living all the year round on wild herbs and roots boiled without salt, or roasted in the ashes. That's my prescription for you, sir!"

"Well, well," said the syndic, "I would willingly exchange my life for yours. You have no expenses, you pay no taxes—do you think that a small thing? Now, I have to spend the very soul out of my body, a little for the cat and a little for the dog, and what remains for me? At the end of the year—so much received, so much spent, everything paid, and nothing over!"

"I should like to take you by the neck and hold you down to our life for a month or so, so that you could try it!"

"Is that the way to speak to me?" said the syndic, somewhat offended. "You ought to be more respectful."

"Oh! you must not think, my dear sir," said the archdeacon, "that the blind man is really wanting in respect towards the authorities. Not at all! He may be a little quick-tempered now and then, but when he recollects himself he is a perfect lamb!"

"A kind of lamb which——," began the Franciscan.

"What do you expect?" interrupted Phœbus. "I used to be as sweet as sugar; but now I am a little spoilt with doing

nothing. Now that I have tried it I find, in truth, that the labour of a porter is better than the idleness of a gentleman. Just set me to work in your factory, sir; let me turn the wheel, and give me thirty centimes a day, and you'll see how the blind man works!"

"Oh! indeed; you and your blarney!" retorted the syndic. "Look here, I would willingly help you, but I cannot. I shall have to shut up the works soon, to turn off every one, even my cook. Are they making game of us with these taxes? I don't know how we can go on; I haven't ten shillings left in the world. It is not my place as syndic to say so, but the fault certainly lies with the Government. . . ."

"Heigho!" said the blind man, "we shall be disappointed indeed, if we are putting our trust in you, Mr. Government!"

"You should put your trust in Providence, young man," said the preaching friar, "and come and hear my sermons!"

"Indeed and he shall come to the sermons, and be hanged to him!" exclaimed the archdeacon. "I'll give him a couple of eggs for every sermon; at Easter, so many sermons and so many eggs. But if you miss one sermon, you blind rascal, you shall get nothing at all!"

"Put it in writing, sir!"

"Why, you blind scoundrel, are you afraid of my dying first?"

"You, sir?—why, you'll live to the age of Noah on the clerical soups that Modesta makes for you! No; it's I that may die before Easter, and I should like to bequeath that little legacy of eggs to my family!"

"Come, come, Modesta! never mind the blind man; it's time to clear the table. Don't sit there keeping the brazier warm."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Modesta, looking into the dish, "there were sixty, and there are only eleven left!"

"I'm very sorry I didn't eat them too!" replied Phœbus, "but I'll come to breakfast after the sermon to-morrow and finish them!"

"Yes, come by all means; they'll just do for you!" said the archdeacon, giving a glance at the dish.

"Are they made of meat or potatoes?" asked the Franciscan, with another great pinch of snuff.

"Of meat, of meat," said Modesta testily.

"Yes, there's just enough meat to swear by!" said Phœbus.

"Even though there were but a piece the size of a pin's head," said the friar as he took another pinch, "that would be enough! To-morrow, you know, archdeacon, it's a black vigil."

"The friar is right ! Do you want to go to hell for eating dumplings to-morrow ! *Persicomele* ! there'll be no more dumplings now till next year,—so good-bye, my fine fellow ! Modesta, light the syndic to the door. Don't you see that he has put on his cloak, and wants to go ? Good-night, sir ! "

"Good-night, archdeacon ! " said the syndic, and then turned to whisper in his ear, " By the bye, the chaplain always stands up for all bad characters . . . and his niece. . . . "

" Why, whatever has the chaplain done to you ? Modesta, light these other people out ! "

" Never mind me, I can see in the dark ! " replied Phœbus, going towards the door. " Modestina, dear, don't you bother yourself with the light ; you're using up too much oil ; you should be saving with it, Modestina ! "

" What are you thinking of, poor blind man ?—such a trifle as that ! " cried Modesta. " Good gracious ! we're all of us baptized Christians, and a little light costs nothing. "

The blind man, in going out, closed the door with such a tremendous bang that he put out Modesta's lamp ; and returning to his disconsolate hut, wished two or three apoplexies to that meddling vagabond of a friar who had deprived him of those poor clothes and the remains of the supper, with which it was the archdeacon's annual custom to reward the four poor wretches for their labours in the belfry. Having reached his house, he told his wife the good tidings of the eggs at Easter, and fell asleep in the tune it takes to tell it. But that night he saw in his dreams neither flowers, nor cities, nor seas bright in the sunshine. He dreamed instead that he was the stout director of the manganese mines, and that he was sitting in a nicely-warmed room at a well-spread table, and just tasting the full flavour of a fat roast fowl. He was just at work on one of the legs when his wife began to turn him over and call him to get up. He struggled with his hands, feeling the director of the mines gradually disappear, and a moment later he became aware that he was only blind Phœbus. Then he hit himself a great thump on the head, and started up because he heard the bells ringing for sermon. When he had got into church he sat down close to the sacristy door, so that the archdeacon might be sure to see him. The preacher seemed to be flinging squalls of rain and wind, and all the devils of hell down from the pulpit on all the crowded, uncovered heads. Phœbus paid no attention to him. When he came out, certain good-for-nothing youngsters, loafing outside, shouted after him :

" Phœbus ! Phœbus ! what has the preacher been saying ? "

" I don't know ! " he replied. " I was thinking of the eggs ! "

" By Bacchus ! the archdeacon is quite right in thinking him a little cracked ! But I do believe that he would be a true believer if

he saw the Divine Master's teachings practised a little better, and also a little to his advantage ! ”

This was what the chaplain said to himself as he came out from the service, with displeasure still written on his face, and also a certain timid disgust, whether provoked by living men or by the dead, whom he was constantly obliged to see, I do not know.

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

1846-1908

THE LITTLE SARDINIAN DRUMMER

ON the 24th of July 1848, the first day of the battle of Custoza, sixty soldiers belonging to one of our regiments of infantry, were ordered to garrison a lonely house on a height near by. But they were suddenly attacked by two companies of Austrians, who, assaulting them on several sides, scarcely gave them time to take refuge within the house and barricade the door, leaving their dead and wounded on the field.

The door being well secured, our soldiers hastened to the windows on the ground floor and upper floor, and opened a deadly fire on the besiegers, who replied vigorously as they slowly approached in the form of a semicircle.

The sixty Italian soldiers were commanded by two subaltern officers, and by a tall, silent, grim old captain, with white hair and whiskers.

With them was a little Sardinian drummer, a boy scarcely more than fourteen years old, but who did not look even twelve, with his dark, olive skin, and black, deep-set eyes with fire in them.

From a room on the upper storey the captain directed the defence, every order sounding like a pistol shot, his iron countenance showing not the slightest emotion.

The little drummer, pale, but with his feet firmly planted on the table, and holding fast to the walls, stretched out his head and neck to look from the window, and saw through the smoke the Austrians steadily advancing over the fields.

The house was near the top of a very steep hillside, so that only one small high window in the upper floor looked out over the crest. The Austrians did not threaten that side, nor was there anybody on the hill-top. The fire was directed against the front and the two sides.

The firing was infernal—a close, heavy hailstorm of balls rained upon the walls and through the broken roof, tearing out the ceiling,

shattering the beams, doors, furniture, filling the air with fragments, plaster, and clouds of lime and dust, utensils and broken glass whizzing, clattering over their heads, rebounding from the walls with a terrifying noise and clash.

Now and then a soldier stationed at the windows fell inward, and was pushed to one side; others staggered from room to room, stanching their wounds with their hands. In the kitchen lay one soldier, pierced through the forehead. The enemy was closing in. At last the captain, until then impassive, began to show signs of uneasiness, and hurriedly left the room, followed by a sergeant. In a few moments the sergeant came rushing back, called the drummer, telling him to follow.

The boy raced up the stairs after him, and entered a dilapidated garret, in which he saw the captain with pencil and paper in hand, leaning on the window-sill, and lying on the ground at his feet was a rope belonging to the well.

The captain folded the paper, and, fixing on the boy those cold, grey eyes before which every soldier trembled, said abruptly:

"Drummer!"

The little drummer's hand went up to his cap.

The captain said:

"Thou art brave."

The boy's eyes flashed.

"Yes, captain," he answered.

"Look down yonder," said the captain, taking him to the window, "on the ground, near the house of Villafranca, where those bayonets glisten. There is our regiment, motionless. Take this paper, grasp this rope, let yourself down from the window, cross the hill like lightning, rush through the fields, reach our men, and give this paper to the first officer you see. Take off your belt and knapsack."

The drummer took off his belt and knapsack, and hid the paper in his breast pocket; the sergeant threw out the rope, holding fast one end; the captain helped the boy to jump through the window, his back toward the fields.

"Be careful," said he, "the salvation of this detachment depends on thy valour and thy legs."

"Trust me, captain," said the drummer, sliding down

"Crouch low on dropping," again said the captain, taking hold of the rope, too.

"Have no fear."

"God speed thee!"

In a few moments the boy was on the ground, the sergeant drew up the rope, and disappeared, while the captain hastened to the little window, and saw the drummer racing down the hill. He now hoped he would escape unseen, but five or six little clouds of dust rising

from the ground warned him that the boy had been discovered by the Austrians, who were firing down from the top of the hill. Those little clouds were the earth torn up by the balls. But the drummer continued running at full speed. After a while the captain exclaimed in consternation: "Dead!" but scarcely was the word out of his mouth when he saw the little drummer rise.

"Ah, it was but a fall!" said he, and breathed again.

The drummer again ran on, but he limped.

"He has sprained his foot," said the captain.

A little cloud of dust rose here and there around the boy, but always farther from him.

He was beyond their reach. The captain uttered a cry of triumph; but his eyes followed him, trembling, for it was a question of minutes. If he did not soon reach the regiment with the note, asking for immediate succour, all his soldiers would be killed, or he would be obliged to surrender, and become a prisoner of war with them.

The boy ran for a while rapidly, then he stopped to limp; again he ran on, but every few minutes he stopped to limp.

"Perhaps a ball has bruised his foot," thought the captain, and he tremblingly noted all his movements, and in his excitement he talked to the drummer as if he could hear him. Every moment his eyes measured the distance between the boy and the bayonets that glistened below on the plain, in the midst of the golden wheat-fields.

Meantime he heard the whistling and the crash of the balls in the rooms below, the voice of command, the shouts of rage of the officers and sergeants; the sharp cries of the wounded, and the noise of broken furniture and crumbling plaster.

"Courage! Valour!" he cried, his eyes following the drummer in the distance. "Forward! Run! Malediction! He stops! Ah, he is up again, forward!"

An officer out of breath comes to tell him that the enemy, without ceasing the fire, wave a white handkerchief, demanding their surrender.

"Let no one answer!" shouts the captain, without taking his eyes from the boy, who was now in the valley, but who no longer ran, and who seemed hopeless of reaching the regiment.

"Forward! Run!" cried the captain with teeth and fists clenched. "Bleed to death, die, unfortunate boy, but reach your destination!" Then he uttered a horrible oath. "Ah, the cursed idler has sat down!"

In fact, up to that moment the boy's head, that could be seen above the wheat, now disappeared as if he had fallen. After a moment his head was again seen, then he was lost behind the wheat-field, and the captain saw him no more.

Then he hurried downstairs. The balls rained, the rooms were

full of wounded, some of whom rolled over like drunken men, catching at the furniture ; the walls and floors were covered with blood. Dead bodies lay across the threshold ; the lieutenant's arm was broken by a ball. Smoke and powder filled the rooms.

"Courage!" shouted the captain. "Stand to your post! Succour is coming! Courage a little longer!"

The Austrians had approached closer. Their disfigured faces could be seen through the smoke. Through the crash of balls could be heard the savage cries insulting them, demanding their surrender, and threatening to cut their throats. A soldier, terrified, withdrew from the window, and the sergeants again pushed him forward.

The fire of the besieged slackened. Discouragement showed on every face ; resistance was no longer possible. The moment came when the Austrians redoubled their efforts, and a voice thundered, at first in German, then in Italian :

"Surrender!"

"No!" shouted the captain from a window. The fire became more deadly, more furious on both sides. Other soldiers fell. There was more than one window without defenders. The fatal moment was imminent. The captain's voice died away in his throat as he exclaimed :

"They do not come! They do not come!"

And he ran furiously from side to side, brandishing his sabre convulsively, ready to die. Then a sergeant, rushing down from the garret, shouted with stentorian voice :

"They come!"

"Ah, they come!" joyfully shouted the captain.

On hearing that cry all—the well, the wounded, sergeants and officers—crowded to the windows and again the fierceness of the defence was redoubled. Soon there was noticed among the enemy a kind of vacillation and a beginning of disorder. Suddenly the captain gathered a few soldiers together on the lower floor to resist with fixed bayonets the impetuous attack on the outside. Then he went upstairs. Scarcely had he mounted when he heard the sound of hurried footsteps, accompanied by a formidable "Hurrah!" and the pointed hats of the Italian carbineers appeared through the smoke, a squadron at double-quick, a brilliant flash of swords whirled through the air above their heads, their shoulders, their backs ; then out charged the little detachment, with fixed bayonets, led by the captain. The enemy wavered, rallied, and at last began to retreat. The field was evacuated, the house was saved, and shortly after two battalions of Italian infantry and two cannon occupied the height.

The captain and the surviving soldiers were incorporated with their regiment, fought again, and the captain was slightly wounded

in the hand by a spent ball during the last bayonet charge. The victory on that day was won by the Italians.

But the following day the battle continued. The Italians were conquered, in spite of their heroic resistance, by superior numbers, and on the morning of the 26th they were in full retreat toward the Mincio.

The captain, though wounded, marched at the head of his company, weary and silent, arriving at sunset at Goito on the Mincio. He immediately sought his lieutenant, who, with his arm broken, had been picked up by the ambulance, and who must have arrived before he did. They pointed out to him a church in which the field hospital had been installed. He went there, the church was filled with the wounded lying in two rows of cots, and mattresses laid on the floor. Two physicians and several practitioners were busily coming and going, and nothing was heard but groans and stifled cries.

Scarcely had the captain entered when he stopped and glanced around in search of his subordinate.

At that moment he heard, near by, his name called faintly :

"Captain !"

He turned. It was the little drummer. He was stretched upon a wooden cot, covered up to the neck with a coarse old red and white check window curtain, his arms lying outside, pale and thin, but with his eyes burning like two coals of fire.

"What ! is it thou ?" asked the captain in a surprised, abrupt manner. "Bravo, thou hast fulfilled thy duty."

"I did all that was possible," replied the drummer.

"Art thou wounded ?" asked the captain, glancing around at the beds, in search of his lieutenant.

"What could you expect ?" replied the boy, who was eager to speak of the honour of being wounded for the first time, otherwise he would not have dared to open his lips before his captain.

"I ran as long as I could with my head down, but, though I crouched, the Austrians saw me immediately. I would have arrived twenty minutes earlier had they not wounded me. Fortunately I met a captain of the general's staff, to whom I gave the note. But it was with great effort I got along after that. I was dying with thirst. I was afraid I could not arrive in time. I cried with rage, thinking that every minute's delay sent one of ours to the other world. But I did all I could. I am content. But look, captain, and excuse me, you are bleeding !"

In fact, from the palm of the badly bandaged hand the blood was flowing.

"Do you wish me to tighten the bandage, captain ? Let me have it for a moment."

The captain gave him his left hand, and stretched out his right

hand to help tie the knot ; but scarcely had the little fellow risen from the pillow when he turned pale, and had to lie back again.

"Enough! enough!" said the captain, looking at him, and withdrawing his bandaged hand, which the drummer wished to retain. "Take care of yourself instead of thinking of others, for slight wounds, if neglected, may have grave consequences."

The little drummer shook his head.

"But thou," said the captain, looking attentively at him, "thou must have lost much blood to be so weak."

"Lost much blood?" repeated the boy, smiling. "Something more than blood. Look!" and he threw down the coverlet. The captain drew back in horror.

The boy had but one leg; the left leg had been amputated above the knee. The stump was wrapped in bloody cloths.

Just then a small, fat army physician in shirt-sleeves passed.

"Ah, captain," said he rapidly, pointing out the little drummer, "there is an unfortunate case. That leg could have been easily saved had he not forced it so much, caused inflammation; it was necessary to amputate it. But he is brave, I assure you. He did not shed a tear or utter a cry. I was proud, while operating, to think he was an Italian boy, my word of honour! Faith, he comes of good stock!"

And he went on his way.

The captain wrinkled his bushy white eyebrows, and looked fixedly at the little drummer while covering him up with the coverlet. Then, slowly, almost unconsciously, yet still looking at him, his hand went to his képi, which he took off.

"Captain!" exclaimed the astonished boy. "What, captain, for me?"

The rough old soldier, who had never spoken a gentle word to an inferior, replied in a soft and exceedingly affectionate voice:

"I am but a captain, thou art a hero!"

Then he threw his arms about the little drummer and kissed him with all his heart.

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

A GREAT DAY

THE G——s were living in the country, near Florence, when the Italian army began preparations to advance upon Rome. In the family the enterprise was regarded with disapproval. The father, the mother, and the two grown daughters, all ardent Catholics and temperate patriots, talked of *moral measures*.

"We don't profess to understand anything about politics," Signora G—— would say to her friends; "I am especially ignorant; in fact, I am afraid I should find it rather difficult to explain *why* I think as I do. But I can't help it; I have a presentiment. There is something inside me that keeps saying. 'This is not the right way for them to go to Rome; they ought not to go, they must not go!' I remember how things were in forty-eight, and in fifty-nine and sixty; well, in those days I never was frightened, I never had the feeling of anxiety that I have now; I always thought that things would come right in the end. But now, you may say what you please, I see nothing but darkness ahead. You may laugh as much as you like . . . pray heaven we don't have to cry one of these days! I don't believe that day is so far off."

The only one of the household who thought differently was the son, a lad of twenty, just rereading his Roman history, and boiling over with excitement. To mention Rome before him was to declare battle, and in one of these conflicts feeling had run so high that it had been unanimously decided not to touch upon the subject in future.

One evening, early in September, one of the official newspapers announced that the Italian troops had actually entered the Papal States. The son was bursting with joy. The father read the article, sat thinking awhile, and then, shaking his head, muttered: "No!" and again: "No!" and a third time: "No!"

"But I beg your pardon, father!" shouted the boy, all aflame.

"Don't let us begin again," the mother gently interposed; and that evening nothing more was said. But the next night something serious happened. The lad, just before going to bed, announced,

without preamble, as though he were saying the most natural thing in the world, that he meant to go to Rome with the army.

There was a general outcry of surprise and indignation, followed by a storm of reproaches and threats. No decent person would willingly be present at such scenes as were about to be enacted ; it was enough that, as Italians, they were all in a measure to blame for what had happened, without deliberately assuming the shame of being an eye-witness ; there was nothing one could not forgive in a lad of good family, except (it was his mother who spoke) this craze to go and see a *poor old man bombarded*. A fine war ! A glorious triumph, indeed !

When they had ended the lad set his teeth, tore in bits the paper clutched between his fingers, and, lighting a candle, flung out of the room, stamping his feet like an Italian actor representing an angry king.

Half an hour later he stole gently back to the dining-room. His father and mother sat there alone, sad and silent. He asked pardon of his father, who grumbly shook hands ; then he returned to his room, followed by his mother.

"Then we shall hear no more of these ideas ?" she tenderly suggested, laying her hands on his shoulders.

He answered her with a kiss.

The next day he crossed the borders of the Papal States.

The discovery of his flight was received with tears, rage, and invectives. They would never consent to see him again ; if he came back, they would not even rise from their seats to welcome him ; they would not speak to him for a month ; they would cut off his allowance ; they had a hundred other plans for his discomfiture. With the mother it was only talk ; but the father meant what he said. He was a good but hard man, averse to compromises, and violent in his anger ; his son knew it and feared him. It was incomprehensible that the lad should have ventured upon such a step.

The news of the 20th of September only increased the resentment of his parents.

"He will see," they muttered. "Only let him try to come back !"

Their words, their gestures, the manner in which they were to receive him, were all thought out and agreed upon : he was to receive a memorable lesson.

On the morning of the 22nd they were all seated in the dining-room, reading, when there was a great knock at the door, and the boy, flushed, panting, sunburnt, stood erect and motionless on the threshold.

No one moved.

"What!" cried the boy, extending his arms in amazement, "you haven't heard the news?"

No one answered.

"Hasn't any one told you? Has no one been out from Florence? Are you all in the dark still?"

No one breathed.

"We have heard," one of the girls at length faltered, after exchanging glances with her father, "that Rome was taken——"

"What! Is *that* all?"

"That is all."

"But what a victory! What a victory!" cried the son, with a shout that set them trembling. "So I am the one to tell you of it!"

They sprang up and surrounded him.

"But how is it possible?" he went on, with excited gestures—"how is it possible that you haven't heard anything? Have there been no rumours about the neighbourhood? Haven't the peasants held a meeting? What is the municipality about? Why, it's inconceivable! Just listen—here, come close to me, so—I'll tell you the whole story; my heart's going at such a rate that I can hardly speak . . ."

"But what has happened?"

"Wait! You sha'n't know yet. You must hear the whole story first, from beginning to end. I want to tell you the thing bit by bit, just as I saw it."

"But *what* is it?—the Roman festival?"

"The *plebiscite*?"

"The King's arrival?"

"No, no, no! Something much more tremendous!"

"But tell us, tell us!"

"Sit down, lad!"

"But how is it that we haven't heard anything about it?"

"How can I tell? All I know is that bringing you the first news of it is the most glorious thing that's ever happened to me. I reached Florence this morning—they knew all about it there, so I rushed straight out here. I fancied that perhaps you mightn't have heard yet—I . . . I'm all out of breath. . . ."

"But tell us, tell us quickly!" the mother and daughters cried, drawing their chairs around him. The father remained at a distance.

"You shall hear, mother—*such* things!" the boy began. "Here, come closer to me. Well, you know what happened on the morning of the twenty-first. The rest of the regiments entered; there were the same crowds, the same shouting and music as on the day before.

But suddenly, about midday, the noise stopped as if by common consent, first in the Corso, then in the other principal streets, and so, little by little, all over the city. The troops of people began to break up into groups, talking to each other in low voices; then they scattered in all directions, taking leave of each other in a way that made one think they meant to meet again. It seemed as though the signal had been given to prepare for something tremendous. Men said a hasty word to each other in passing and then hurried on, each going his own way. The whole Corso was in movement; people were rushing in and out of the houses, calling out from the street and being answered from the windows; soldiers dashed about as though in answer to a summons; cavalry officers trotted by; men and boys passed with bundles of flags on their shoulders and in their arms, all breathless and hurried, as if the devil were after them. Not knowing a soul, and having no way of finding out what it all meant, I tried to guess what was up from the expression of their faces. They all looked cheerful enough, but not as frantically glad as they had been; there was a shade of doubt, of anxiety. One could see they were planning something. From the Corso I wandered on through some of the narrower streets, stopping now and then to watch one of the groups. Everywhere I saw the same thing—crowds of people, all in a hurry, all coming and going, with the same air that I had already noticed in the Corso, of concealing from somebody what they were doing, although it was all being done in the open. Knots, bands, hundreds of men and women passed me in silence; they were all going in the same direction, as though to some appointed meeting-place."

"Where were they going?" the father and mother interrupted.

"Wait a minute. I went back to the Corso. As I approached it I heard a deep, continuous murmur of voices, growing louder and louder, like the noise of a great crowd. The Corso was full of people, all standing still and facing toward the Capitol, as though they expected something to come from that direction. From the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia they were jammed so tight that nobody could budge. I heard whispers flying about: 'Now they're coming!'—'They're coming from over there!'—'Who's coming?'—'The main column—here's the main column!'—'Here it is!'—'No, it isn't!'—'Yes, it is!' All at once there was a stir in the crowd, and a big shout, 'Here they are!' and down the middle of the street a wide passage-way seemed to open of itself, as though to make room for a procession. Every head was uncovered. I fought my way through from the outer edge of the crowd, to get a look at what was coming. I can feel the shiver down my back now! 'First, a lot of generals in full uniform,

and gentlemen in civilians' dress, with the tricoloured scarf ; in the midst of them, girls, women, and ragged, tattered men ; workmen, peasants, women with babies, soldiers of all arms ; smartly-dressed ladies, students, whole families clutching hold of each other's hands, for fear of getting lost in the crowd ; all jammed together, trampled upon, so that they could barely move ; and with it all not a sound but a buzzing, monotonous murmur ; silence on both sides of the street ; silence in the windows. It was awfully solemn ; half strange and half fearful. I felt as if I were in a trance."

"But where were they going to ?" his parents and sisters interposed with growing impatience.

"Wait a bit !" he returned. "I fought my way into the thick of it, with the crowds on both sides of the street piling in on top of me. Lord, what a crush ! They spread out like a torrent, pouring into every cranny, sweeping people on ahead of them, into shop-doors, into the courtyards of houses, wherever there was a yard of vacant space. As we went on, other streams of people kept surging into the Corso from all the side streets, which were just as closely packed ; on we swept from the Capitol ; and they said that there were thousands more in the Forum. Hordes kept pouring in from the Piazza di Spagna, from the Via del Babbuino, from the Piazza del Popolo. Every one had something in his hand : a wreath of flowers, a branch of olive or laurel, a banner, a rag tied to a stick. Some carried holy images uplifted above their heads ; inscriptions, emblems, pictures of the Pope, of the King, of the Princes, of Garibaldi ; never under the sun was there such a medley and confusion of people and things ! And all the while only that low murmur, and the great multitude moving on with a calmness, a dignity that seemed miraculous. I felt as though I were dreaming !"

They gathered close round him without a word.

"Suddenly I noticed that the crowd had turned to the left. Round we all went ; very slowly, with the greatest difficulty, shoved, trampled on, knocked about ; with our arms pinned to our sides, and hardly able to breathe, we fought our way, street by street, to the little square by the bridge of St. Angelo. The bridge itself was crammed with people ; beyond it there were more crowds, which seemed to stretch all the way to St. Peter's. The right bank of the Tiber swarmed like an ant-hill. Crossing the bridge was a hard job ; it took us over a quarter of an hour. The poor devils on each side, in their fear of being pushed over the edge, clutched the parapet madly, and shouted with terror ; I believe there were several accidents. . .

"Well, at last we got across. All the streets leading to the

Piazza of St. Peter were choked with human beings. When we reached the foot of one of the two streets that run straight to St. Peter's we heard a great roar, like the noise of the sea in a gale ; it seemed to come to us in gusts, now near by, now a long way off. It was the noise of the crowd in the square before St. Peter's. We rushed ahead more madly than ever ; climbing over each other, carried along, pushed, swept, and dragged, till at last we reached the square. God, if you could have seen it !—What a spectacle !—The whole huge square was jammed, black, swarming ; no longer a square, but an ocean. All around the outer edge, between the four lines of columns, on the steps of the church, in the portico, on the great terraced roof, in the outer galleries of the dome, on the capitals of the columns, on the very pilasters ; in the windows of the houses to the right of the square, on the balconies, on the leads above, below, to the right and to the left, wherever a human being could find foothold, wherever there was some projection to cling to or to dangle from, everywhere there were heads, arms, legs, banners, shouts, gesticulations. The whole of Rome was there."

"Heavens ! . . . And the Vatican ?" the women cried, in a tremble.

"All shut up. You know that a wing of the Vatican overlooks the square, and that the Pope's apartments are in that wing. Every window was closed ; it looked like an abandoned palace, like a cold, rigid, impassive face, staring straight ahead with wide-open motionless eyes. The crowd looked up at it with a murmur.

"Over by the church steps I noticed a lot of officers and gentlemen moving about and giving orders, which seemed to be handed on through the crowd. The excitement was increasing. Every head in the square was uncovered ; white heads of old men, brown heads of soldiers, fair heads of little children. The sun blazed down on it all. Thousands of shapes, colours, sounds, seemed to undulate and blend ; banners, green boughs, fluttering rags, were tossed back and forth as though upon a dancing sea. The crowd seethed and quivered as if the ground underfoot were on fire.

"Suddenly there was a shout that swept over the whole square : 'The boys ! The children ! Let's have the children !'

"Then, as if every one were following some concerted plan of action, all the children in the square were lifted up above the crowd, and the men and women who carried them fought a way through to the front of the Vatican. The bigger boys made their own way. Bands of ten and twenty of them, holding each other by the hand, wriggled between people's legs ; hundreds of children, some on their own feet, some carried, some pushed, a whole world of little folk,

hidden till then in the crowd, suddenly swarmed in one corner of the square ; and how the women screamed ! ‘ Take care !— Make room ! —Look out for my child ! ’

“ Presently there was another shout : ‘ The women now ! The women ! ’ and another shuffling up and settling down of the crowd. Then a third shout, louder than any of the others : ‘ The army ! The troops ! ’ this time. Then came the most indescribable agitation, but underneath it all a sense of order and rapidity ; none of the ordinary confusion and delay ; every one helped, made way, co-operated ; the whole immense multitude seemed to be under orders. Gradually the disturbance ceased, the noise diminished, the gesticulation subsided ; and looking about one saw that all the soldiers, women, and children in the crowd had disappeared as if by magic.

“ There they all stood, on the right side of the square, divided into three great battalions that extended from the door of St. Peter’s to the centre of the colonnade, all facing the Vatican, packed together and motionless. The crowd burst into frantic applause.”

“ But the Vatican ? ” the whole family cried out for the third time.

“ Shut up and silent as a convent ; but wait. Suddenly the applause ceased, and every head turned backward, whispering ‘ Silence ! ’ The whisper travelled across the square and down the length of the two streets leading to it , gradually the sound died out, and the crowd became absolutely, incredibly silent : it was supernatural. All at once, in the midst of this silence, we heard a faint mysterious chirping ; a vague, diffused sound of voices, that seemed to come from overhead. Gradually it grew louder, and there was an uncertain gathering of shrill, discordant tones, now close by, now far off, but growing steadier and more harmonious, until at length it was blent in a single tremendous silvery chant that soared above us like the singing of a choir of angels. Thousands of children were singing the hymn to Pius IX.—the hymn of forty-seven.”

“ Oh, God—oh, God ! ” cried the mother and daughters, with clasped hands.

“ That song re-echoed in every heart ; it touched something deep down and tender in every one of us. A thrill ran through the crowd ; there was a wild waving of arms and hands, as though to take the place of speech ; but the only sound was a confused murmur.

“ ‘ Holy Father,’ that murmur seemed to say, ‘ look at them, listen to them ! They are our children, they are your little ones, who are looking for you, who are praying to you, who implore your blessing.’ Yield to their entreaty ; give them your blessing ; grant that our religion and our country may dwell together as one faith in our hearts. One word from you, Holy Father, one sign from you,

one glance even, promising pardon and peace, and every man of us shall be with you and for you, now and for ever ! Look—these our children and your little ones ! ’

“ Thousands of banners fluttered in the air, the song ceased, and a deep silence followed.”

“ Well ? ” they cried breathlessly.

“ Still shut up,” the lad answered. “ Then the women began to sing. There was a deep thrill in the immense voice that rose ; a something that throbs only in the breast of mothers ; it seemed a cry rather than a hymn ; it was sweet and solemn.

“ At first the crowd was motionless ; then a wave of excitement passed over it, and the hymn was drowned in a great clamour : ‘ These are our mothers, these are our wives and sisters ; Holy Father, listen to them. They have never known hatred or anger , they have always loved and hoped ; all they ask is that you should give them leave to couple your name with that of Italy on their children’s lips. Holy Father, one word from you will spare them many cruel doubts and many bitter tears. Give them your blessing, Holy Father ! ’ ”

The boy’s listeners questioned him with look and gesture.

“ Still closed,” he answered ; “ still closed. But then a tremendous chant burst out, followed by a wild surging of the crowd : the soldiers were singing.—‘ These are our soldiers,’ the people cried ; ‘ they shall be yours, Holy Father. They come from the fields and the workshops ; they will keep watch at your door, Holy Father, they will attend upon your steps. They were born under your rule, as children they heard your glorious cry for liberty, they fought the stranger in your name and in that of their King ; in the hour of danger, you will find them close about your throne, ready to die for you. One word, Holy Father, and these swords, these breasts, this flesh and blood are yours ! They ask your blessing on their country, Holy Father, they ask you to repeat your own glorious words ! ’ . . .

“ A window in the Vatican opened. The song ceased, the shouts died out—silence. There was not a soul in the window. For a few seconds the immense multitude seemed to stop breathing. It seemed as though something moved behind the window—as though at the back of the room a shadow appeared and then vanished. Then we fancied that we caught a glimpse of people moving to and fro, and heard a vague sound. Every face was turned towards the window, every eye was fixed upon it. Suddenly, as if by inspiration, every arm in the multitude was stretched out towards the palace ; mothers lifted their children above their heads, soldiers swung their caps on the points of their bayonets, every banner was shaken out, and a hundred thousand voices burst into one tremendous shout,

'Viva! Viva! Viva!' At the window of the Vatican something light-coloured appeared, wavered, fluttered in the air. God in heaven!" cried the boy, with his arms about his mother's neck, "it was the flag of Italy!"

The delight, the joy, the enthusiasm which greeted his words are indescribable. The lad had spoken with so much warmth, had been so carried away by his imagination, that he had not perceived that, gradually, as the story proceeded, he had passed from fact to fiction; and his eyes were wet, his voice shook, with the spell of his hallucination. His words carried conviction, and not a doubt clouded the happiness of his listeners. They laughed and cried and kissed each other, feeling themselves suddenly released from all their doubts and scruples, from all the miserable conflicts of conscience that had tortured them as Italians and as Catholics! The reconciliation between Church and State! The dream of so many years! What peace it promised, what a future of love and harmony! What a sense of freedom and security!

"Thank God, thank God!" the mother cried, sinking into a chair, worn out by her emotions. And then, in a moment or two, they were all at the lad again, clamouring for fresh details.

"Is it really true?"

"Haven't you dreamed it?"

"Go on, tell us everything. Tell us about the Pope, about the crowd, about what happened next . . ."

"What happened next?" the boy began again, in a tired voice. "I hardly know. There was such an uproar, such confusion, such an outburst of frenzy, that the mere recollection of it makes my brain reel. All I saw was a vortex of arms and flags, and the breath was almost knocked out of me by a thundering blow on the chest. After a while, I got out of the thick of it, and plunged into one of the streets leading to the bridge of St. Angelo. People were still pouring into the piazza from Borgo Pio with frantic shouts. I heard afterwards that the crowd tried to break into the Vatican; the soldiers had to keep them back, first breast to breast, then with blows, and then with their bayonets. They say that some people were suffocated in the press. No one knows yet what happened inside the Vatican; there was a rumour that the Pope had given his blessing from the window—but I didn't see him. I was almost dead when I got to the bridge. The news of what had taken place had already spread over the whole city, and from every direction crowds were still pouring towards the Vatican. Detachments of cavalry went by me at a trot; orderlies and *aides-de-camp* carrying orders dashed along the streets. Hearing their shouts, the people in the windows shouted back at them. Decrepit old men, sick people, women with babies in their arms, swarmed on the terraces, poured out of the

houses, questioning, wondering, embracing one another. . . . At last I got to the Corso. At that minute there was a tremendous report from the direction of the Pincio, another from Porta Pia, a third from San Pancrazio: all the batteries of the Italian army were saluting the Pope. Soon afterwards the bells of the Capitol began to ring; then, one after another, a hundred churches chimed in. The crowds of Borgo Pio surged frantically back towards the left bank of the Tiber, invading the streets, the squares, the houses, stripping the coverings from the papal escutcheons, carrying in triumph busts of Pius IX., portraits and banners. Thousands assembled with frantic cheers before the palaces of the Roman nobles who are known for their devotion to the Holy See. In answer to the cheers, the owners of the houses appeared on their balconies and unfurled the Italian flag.

"Wait a minute, I'm out of breath . . ."

As soon as he had recovered his breath he was assailed with fresh questions.

"Well, and what then? And the Vatican—? The Pope—?"

"I don't know.—But Rome that night . . . how can I ever tell you how beautiful, how great, how marvellous it was! The night was perfectly clear, and I don't believe such an illumination was ever seen since the world began. The Corso was on fire; the churches were jammed with people, and there was preaching in every one of them. The streets were full of music, dancing, and singing; people harangued the crowds in the *cafés* and the theatres.

"I wanted to see St. Peter's again. There had been a rumour that His Holiness needed rest, and Borgo Pio was as still as it is on the stillest night. The piazza was full of moonlight. A silent throng was gathered about the two fountains and on the steps of the church. Many were sitting down, many stretched at full length on the ground; the greater number had fallen asleep, worn out by the fatigue and excitement of the day; women, soldiers, children, lay huddled together in a confused heap. Hundreds of others were on their knees, and sentinels of all the different corps moved about here and there, with little flags and crosses fastened to the barrels of their guns. The ground was strewn with flags, foliage, flowers, and hats lost in the crush; the windows of the Vatican were lit up; there was not a sound to be heard, the crowd seemed to be holding its breath.

"I turned away, beside myself with the thought of all that I had seen, of the effect that it would produce in Italy, and all over the world; of what you would all say to it, and you most of all, father! I found myself at the station without knowing how I had got there. It was full of noise and confusion. I jumped on to the train, we started, and here I am. The news reached Florence last night;

they say the excitement was indescribable ; the King has left for Rome ; the news is all over the world by this time ! ”

He sank into a chair and sat silent, as though his breath had failed him. Then he sprang up and rushed out to intercept the papers, which usually reached the villa at eleven o'clock in the morning.

In this way he succeeded in maintaining the blissful delusion until evening. The dinner was full of gaiety, the lad continued to pour out detail after detail, and his listeners to heap benediction upon benediction.

Suddenly a hurried step was heard on the stairs, and the bell rang violently. The door opened, and a tall, pale priest, with a drawn mouth, appeared on the threshold. He was a recent acquaintance of the family, who felt no great sympathy for him, but who received him courteously more out of respect for his cloth than out of regard for his merits.

As he entered, all but the son sprang up and surrounded him with excited exclamations.

“ Well, have you heard the news ? Thank God, it's all ended ! The hand of God is in it ! What do you think of it all ? Tell us, let us hear your opinion ! ”

“ But what news ? ” asked the priest, looking from one to the other with astonished eyes.

In wild haste, and all speaking at once, they poured out the story of the festival, the forgiveness, the reconciliation.

The priest stared at them, with the look of a man who finds himself unexpectedly surrounded by lunatics ; then, with a withering glance at the boy, and a smile of malignant triumph—

“ Fortunately,” he said, “ there is not a word of truth in it ! ”

“ Not a word of truth in it ? ” they clamoured, turning upon their informant.

The boy, unmoved by their agitation, returned the priest's look half-scornfully, half-sadly.

“ Your reverence, don't say fortunately. Since you are an Italian, rather say, ‘ Alas, that it is not so ! ’ ”

For a moment the others stood aghast ; then, angered, as people will be, rather against those who undeceive them than against those who delude them, they turned towards the priest, involuntarily echoing the boy's words : “ He's right, your reverence ! Say rather, ‘ Alas, that it is not so ! ’ ”

The priest pointed to his own breast with a long knotty finger.

“ I ? ” he exclaimed bitterly, “ never ! ”

At these words, the boy's father, rudely roused from his mood of tender exaltation, and bursting, after his wont, into sudden fury,

stretched his arm towards the priest, with a cry that rang through the room like a pistol shot: "Out of my house this instant!"

The priest stalked out, slamming the door. The lad's arms were about his father's neck; and the old man, laying his hands on his son's head, said gently · "I forgive you."

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

1863

SAN PANTALEONE

THE great sandy piazza glittered as if strewn with powdered pumice. Its whitewashed houses held a strange metallic glow, like the walls of an immense furnace cooling off. The glare of the clouds, reflected from the stone pillars of the church at its far end, gave them the appearance of red granite. The church windows blazed as with inward fire. The sacred images had assumed life-like colours and attitudes, and the massive edifice seemed lifted now, in the splendour of the new celestial phenomenon, to a prouder domination than ever, above the houses of Radusa.

Groups of men and women, gesticulating and talking loudly, were pouring from the streets into the square. Superstitious terror grew in leaps and bounds from face to face. A thousand awful images of divine punishment rose out of their rude fancies; and comments, eager disputes, plaintive appeals, wild stories, prayers, and cries were mingled in a deep uproar, as of a hurricane approaching. For some time past this bloody redness of the sky had lasted through the night, disturbing its tranquillity, illumining sullenly the sleeping fields, and making dogs howl.

"Giacobbe! Giacobbe!" shouted some, waving their arms, who till then had stood in a compact band around a pillar of the church portico, talking in low tones, "Giacobbe!"

There came out through the main door, and drew near to those who called him, a long, emaciated man, apparently consumptive, whose head was bald at the top, but had a crown of long reddish hair about the temples and above the nape of the neck. His little sunken eyes, animated with the fire of a deep passion, were set close and had no particular colour. The absence of his two upper front teeth gave to his mouth when speaking, and to his sharp chin with its few scattered hairs, the strangeness of a senile faun. The rest of his body was a wretched structure of bones ill-concealed by his clothes. The skin on his hands, his wrists, the backs of his arms,

and his breast was full of blue punctures made with a pin and india-ink, the souvenirs of sanctuaries visited, pardons obtained, and vows performed.

When the fanatic approached the group at the pillar, a swarm of questions arose from the anxious men. "Well, then? what did Don Cónsolo say? Will they send out only the silver arm? Would not the whole bust do better? When would Pallura come back with the candles? Was it one hundred pounds of wax? Only one hundred? And when would the bells begin to ring? Well, then? Well, then?"

The clamour increased around Giacobbe. Those on the outskirts of the crowd pushed towards the church. From all the streets people poured into the square till they filled it. And Giacobbe kept answering his questions, whispering, as if revealing dreadful secrets and bringing prophecies from far. He had seen aloft in the bloody sky a threatening hand, and then a black veil, and then a sword and a trumpet.

"Go ahead! Go ahead!" they urged him, looking in each other's faces, and seized with a strange desire to hear of marvels, while the wonder grew from mouth to mouth in the crowd.

II

The vast crimson zone rose slowly from the horizon to the zenith and bade fair to cover the whole vault of heaven. An undulating vapour of molten metal seemed pouring down on the roofs of the town; and in the descending crepuscule yellow and violet rays flashed through a trembling and iridescent glow. One long streak, brighter than the others, pointed towards a street which opened on the river-front, and at the end of this street the water flamed away between the tall slim poplar-trunks, and beyond the stream lay a strip of luxuriant country, from which the old Saracen towers stood out confusedly, like stone islets, in the dark. The air was full of the stifling emanations of mown hay, with now and then a whiff from putrefied silkworms in the bushes. Flights of swallows crossed this space with quick, scolding cries, trafficking between the river sands and the eaves.

An expectant silence had interrupted the murmur of the multitude. The name Pallura ran from lip to lip. Signs of angry impatience broke forth here and there. The waggon was not yet to be seen along the river-road; the candles had not come; Don Cónsolo therefore was delaying the exposition of the relics and the acts of exorcism; the danger still threatened. Panic fear invaded the hearts of all those people crowded together like a flock of sheep,

and no longer venturing to raise their eyes to heaven. The women burst out sobbing, and at the sound of weeping every mind was oppressed and filled with consternation.

Then at last the bells began to ring. As they were hung low, their deep quivering strokes seemed to graze the heads of the people, and a sort of continuous wailing filled the intervals.

"San Pantaleone ! San Pantaleone !"

It was an immense, unanimous cry of desperate men imploring aid. Kneeling, with blanched faces and outstretched hands, they supplicated.

"San Pantaleone !"

Then, at the church door, in the midst of the smoke of two censers, Don Cónsolo appeared, resplendent in a violet chasuble, with gold embroidery. He held aloft the sacred arm of silver, and conjured the air, shouting the Latin words :

" Ut fidelibus tuis aeris serenitatem concedere digneris, Te rogamus, audi nos."

At sight of the relic the multitude went delirious with affectionate joy. Tears ran from all eyes, and through glistening tears these eyes beheld a miraculous gleam emanate from the three fingers held up as if in the act of benediction. The arm appeared larger now, in the enkindled air.

The dim light awoke strange scintillations in the precious stones. The balsamic odour of incense spread quickly to the nostrils of the devotees.

" Te rogamus, audi nos !"

But when the arm was carried back and the tolling stopped, in that moment of silence a tinkling of little bells was heard near at hand coming from the river-road. Then of a sudden the crowd rushed in that direction and many voices cried.

"It is Pallura with the candles ! It is Pallura coming ! Here's Pallura !"

The waggon came screeching over the gravel, drawn at a walk by a heavy grey mare, over whose shoulders hung a great shining brass horn, like a half-moon. When Giacobbe and the others made towards her, the pacific animal stopped and breathed hard. Giacobbe, who reached the waggon first, saw stretched out on its floor the bloody body of Pallura, and screamed, waving his arms towards the crowd, "He is dead ! He is dead !"

The sad news spread like lightning. People crowded around the waggon, and craned their necks to see, thinking no longer of the threats in the sky, because struck by the unexpected happening and

filled with that natural ferocious curiosity which the sight of blood awakens.

"He is dead? What killed him?"

Pallura lay on his back upon the boards, with a broad wound in the middle of his forehead, with one ear torn, with gashes on his arms, his sides, and one thigh. A warm stream flowed down to his chin and neck, staining his shirt and forming dark, shining clots on his breast, his leathern belt, and even his breeches. Giacobbe hung over the body; all the rest waited around him; an auroral flush lighted up their perplexed faces; and at that moment of silence, from the river-bank arose the song of the frogs, and bats skimmed back and forth above the heads of the crowd.

Suddenly Giacobbe, straightening up, with one cheek bloody, cried:

"He is not dead. He still breathes."

A hollow murmur ran through the crowd, and the nearest strained forward to look. The anxiety of those at a distance commenced to break into clamour. Two women brought a jug of water, another some strips of linen. A youth held out a gourd full of wine.

The wounded man's face was washed, the flow of blood from his forehead was checked; his head was raised. Then voices inquired loudly the cause of his deed. The hundred pounds of wax were missing; only a few fragments of candles remained in the cracks of the waggon-bed.

In the commotion their minds grew more and more inflamed, exasperated, and contentious. And as an old hereditary hatred burned in them against the town of Mascálico, on the opposite bank of the river, Giacobbe said venomously, in a hoarse voice:

"What if the candles have been offered to San Gonselvo?"

It was like the first flash of a conflagration! The spirit of church-rivalry awoke all at once in these people brutalised by many years of blind, savage worship of their own one idol. The fanatic's words flew from mouth to mouth. And beneath the tragic dull-red sky, the raging multitude resembled a tribe of mutinous gypsies.

The name of the saint broke from all throats, like a war-cry. The most excited hurled curses towards the river, and waved their arms and shook their fists. Then all these faces blazing with anger, and reddened also by the unusual light,—all these faces, broad and massive, to which their gold ear-rings and thick overhanging hair gave a wild, barbaric character,—all these faces turned eagerly towards the man lying there, and grew soft with pity. Women, with pious care, tried to bring him back to life. Loving hands changed the cloths on his wounds, sprinkled water in his face, set

the gourd of wine to his lips, made a sort of pillow under his head.

"Pallura, poor Pallura, won't you answer?"

He lay supine, his eyes closed, his mouth half open, with brown soft hair on his cheeks and chin, the gentle beauty of youth still showing in his features contracted with pain. From beneath the bandage on his forehead a mere thread of blood trickled down over his temples; at the corners of his mouth stood little beads of pale red foam, and from his throat issued a faint broken hiss, like the sound of a sick man gargling. About him attentions, questions, feverish glances multiplied. The mare from time to time shook her head and neighed in the direction of the houses. An atmosphere as of an impending hurricane hung over the whole town.

Then from the square rang out the screams of a woman, of a mother. They seemed all the louder for the sudden hushing of all other voices, and an enormous woman, suffocated in her fat, broke through the crowd and hurried to the waggon, crying aloud. Being heavy and unable to climb into it, she seized her son's feet, with sobbing words of love, with such sharp broken cries and such a terrible comic expression of grief, that all the bystanders shuddered and averted their faces.

"Zaccheo! Zaccheo! My heart, my joy!" screamed the widow unceasingly, kissing the feet of the wounded man and dragging him to her towards the ground.

The wounded man stirred, his mouth was contorted by a spasm, but although he opened his eyes and looked up, they were veiled with damp, so that he could not see. Big tears began to well forth at the corners of his eyelids and roll down over his cheeks and neck. His mouth was still awry. A vain effort to speak was betrayed by the hoarse whistling in his throat. And the crowd pressed closer, saying:

"Speak, Pallura! Who hurt you? Who hurt you? Speak! Speak!"

Beneath this question was a trembling rage, an intensifying fury, a deep tumult of reawakened feelings of vengeance; and the hereditary hatred boiled in every heart.

"Speak! Who hurt you? Tell us! Tell us!"

The dying man opened his eyes again; and as they were holding his hands tightly, perhaps this warm living contact gave him a momentary strength, for his gaze quickened and a vague stammering sound came to his lips. The words were not yet distinguishable. The panting breath of the multitude could be heard through the silence. Their eyes had an inward flame, because all expected one single word.

"Ma—Ma—Mascálico——"

"Mascálico! Mascálico!" shrieked Giacobbe, who was bending.

over him, with ear intent to snatch the weak syllables from his dying lips.

An immense roar greeted the cry. The multitude swayed at first as if tempest-swept. Then, when a voice, dominating the tumult, gave the order of attack, the mob broke up in haste. A single thought drove these men forward, a thought which seemed to have been stamped by lightning upon all minds at once : to arm themselves with some weapon. Towering above the consciousness of all arose a sort of bloody fatality, beneath the great tawny glare of the heavens, and in the electric odour emanating from the anxious fields.

IV

And the phalanx, armed with scythes, bill-hooks, axes, hoes, and guns, reunited in the square before the church. And all cried "San Pantaleone !"

Don Cónsolo, terrified by the din, had taken refuge in a stall behind the altar. A handful of fanatics, led by Giacobbe, made their way into the principal chapel, forced the bronze grille, and went into the underground chamber where the bust of the saint was kept. Three lamps, fed with olive oil, burned softly in the damp air of the sacristy, where in a glass case the Christian idol glittered, with its white head surrounded by a broad gilt halo ; and the walls were hidden under the wealth of native offerings.

When the idol, borne on the shoulders of four herculean men, appeared at last between the pillars and shone in the auroral light, a long gasp of passion ran through the waiting crowd, and a quiver of joy passed like a breath of wind over all their faces. And the column moved away, the enormous head of the saint oscillating above, with its empty eye-sockets turned to the front.

Now through the sky, in the deep, diffused glow, brighter meteors ploughed their furrows ; groups of thin clouds broke away from the hem of the vapour zone and floated off, dissolving slowly. The whole town of Radusa stood out like a smouldering mountain of ashes. Behind and before, as far as eye could reach, the country lay in an indistinctly lucent mass. A great singing of frogs filled the sonorous solitude.

On the river-road Pallura's waggon blocked the way. It was empty, but still soiled, here and there, with blood. Angry curses broke suddenly from the mob. Giacobbe shouted :

"Let us put the saint in it !"

So the bust was placed in the waggon-bed and drawn, by many arms into the ford. The battle-line thus crossed the frontier. Metallic gleams ran along the files. The parted water broke in luminous spray, and the current flamed away red between the pop-

lars, in the distance, towards the quadrangular towers. Mascálico showed itself on a little hill, among olive trees, asleep. The dogs were barking here and there, with a persistent fury of reply. The column, issuing from the ford, left the public road and advanced rapidly straight across country. The silver bust was borne again on men's shoulders, and towered above their heads amid the tall, odorous grain, starred with bright fireflies.

Suddenly a shepherd in his straw hut, where he lay to guard the grain, seized with mad panic at sight of so many armed men, started to run up the hill, yelling, "Help! Help!" And his screams echoed in the olive grove.

Then it was that the Radusani charged. Among tree-trunks and dry reeds the silver saint tottered, ringing as he struck low branches, and glittering momentarily at every steep place in the path. Ten, twelve, twenty guns, in a vibrating flash, rattled their shot against the mass of houses. Crashes, then cries, were heard; then a great commotion. Doors were opened; others were slammed shut. Window-panes fell shattered. Vases fell from the church and broke on the street. In the track of the assailants a white smoke rose quietly up through the incandescent air. They all, blinded and in bestial rage, cried, "Kill! kill!"

A group of fanatics remained about San Pantaleone. Atrocious insults for San Gonselvo broke out amid waving scythes and brandished hooks:

"Thief! Thief! Beggar! The candles! The candles!"

Other bands took the houses by assault, breaking down the doors with hatchets. And as they fell, unhinged and shivered, San Pantaleone's followers leaped in, howling, to kill the defenders.

The women, half-naked, took refuge in corners, imploring pity. They warded off the blows, grasping the weapons and cutting their fingers. They rolled at full length on the floor, amid heaps of blankets and sheets.

Giacobbe, long, quick, red as a Turkish scimitar, led the persecution, stopping ever and anon to make sweeping imperious gestures over the heads of the others with a great scythe. Pallid, bare-headed, he held the van, in the name of San Pantaleone. More than thirty men followed him. They all had a dull, confused sense of walking through a conflagration, over quaking ground, and beneath a blazing vault ready to crumble.

But from all sides began to come the defenders, the Mascalicesi, strong and dark as mulattos, sanguinary foes, fighting with long spring-bladed knives, and aiming at the belly and the throat, with guttural cries at every blow.

The mêlée rolled away, step by step, towards the church. From the roofs of two or three houses flames were already bursting. A

horde of women and children, wan-eyed and terror-stricken, were fleeing headlong among the olive trees. Then the hand-to-hand struggle between the males, unimpeded by tears and lamentations, became more concentrated and ferocious.

Under the rust-coloured sky, the ground was strewn with corpses. Broken imprecations were hissed through the teeth of the wounded ; and steadily, through all the clamour, still came the cry of the Radusani :

" The candles ! The candles ! "

But the enormous church door of oak, studded with nails, remained barred. The Mascalicesi defended it against the pushing crowd and the axes. The white, impassive silver saint oscillated in the thick of the fight, still upheld on the shoulders of the four giants, who refused to fall, though bleeding from head to foot. It was the supreme desire of the assailants to place their idol on the enemy's altar.

Now while the Mascalicesi fought like lions, performing prodigies on the stone steps, Giacobbe suddenly disappeared around the corner of the building, seeking an undefended opening through which to enter the sacristy. And beholding a narrow window not far from the ground, he climbed up to it, wedged himself into its embrasure, doubled up his long body, and succeeded in crawling through. The cordial aroma of incense floated in the solitude of God's house. Feeling his way in the dark, guided by the roar of the fight outside, he crept towards the door, stumbling against chairs and bruising his face and hands.

The furious thunder of the Radusan axes was echoing from the tough oak, when he began to force the lock with an iron bar, panting, suffocated by a violent agonising palpitation which diminished his strength, blind, giddy, stiffened by the pain of his wounds, and dripping with tepid blood.

" San Pantaleone ! San Pantaleone ! " bellowed the hoarse voices of his comrades outside, redoubling their blows as they felt the door slowly yield. Through the wood came to his ears the heavy thump of falling bodies, the quick thud of knife-thrusts nailing someone through the back. And a grand sentiment, like the divine uplift of the soul of a hero saving his country, flamed up then in that bestial beggar's heart.

V

By a final effort the door was flung open. The Radusani rushed in, with an immense howl of victory, across the bodies of the dead, to carry the silver saint to the altar. A vivid quivering light was reflected suddenly into the obscure nave, making the golden candle-

sticks shine, and the organ-pipes above. And in that yellow glow, which now came from the burning houses and now disappeared again, a second battle was fought. Bodies grappled together and rolled over the brick floor, never to rise, but to bound hither and thither in the contortions of rage, to strike the benches, and die under them, or on the chapel steps, or against the taper-spikes about the confessionals. Under the peaceful vault of God's house the chilling sound of iron penetrating men's flesh or sliding along their bones, the single broken groan of men struck in a vital spot, the crushing of skulls, the roar of victims unwilling to die, the atrocious hilarity of those who had succeeded in killing an enemy,—all this re-echoed distinctly. And a sweet, faint odour of incense floated above the strife.

The silver idol had not, however, reached the altar in triumph, for a hostile circle stood between. Giacobbe fought with his scythe, and, though wounded in several places, did not yield a hand's breadth of the stair which he had been the first to gain. Only two men were left to hold up the saint, whose enormous white head heaved and reeled grotesquely like a drunken mask. The men of Mascálico were growing furious.

Then San Pantaleone fell on the pavement, with a sharp, vibrant ring. As Giacobbe dashed forward to pick him up, a big devil of a man dealt him a blow with a bill-hook, which stretched him out on his back. Twice he rose and twice was struck down again. Blood covered his face, his breast, his hands, yet he persisted in getting up. Enraged by this ferocious tenacity of life, three, four, five clumsy peasants together stabbed him furiously in the belly, and the fanatic fell over, with the back of his neck against the silver bust. He turned like a flash and put his face against the metal, with his arms outspread and his legs drawn up. And San Pantaleone was lost.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

MASTRO PEPPE'S MAGIC

MASTRO PEPPE LA BRAVETTA was a stout, stupid, good-natured man. He lived in Pescara, sold pots and pans, and was terribly in awe of his wife, the severe and miserly Donna Pelagia, who ruled him with a rod of iron. Besides the income derived from his business, he possessed a piece of land on the other side of the river which produced enough to keep a pig. To this property the couple were wont to repair every January, to preside over the killing and salting of the pig which had been fattening through the year.

Now one year it so happened that Pelagia was not very well, and La Bravetta was to attend the execution alone. And to him, in the course of the afternoon, came two of his friends, graceless vagabonds, Matteo Puriello, nick-named Ciávola, who was a poacher, and Biagio Quaglia, better known as Il Ristabilito, whose most serious occupation was that of playing the guitar at weddings and on other festive occasions.

When he saw these two approaching he welcomed them enthusiastically, and then, leading them into the building where the wonderful pig was laid out on the table, asked—

"What do you say to this, now? Isn't he a beauty? What do you think of him?"

The two friends contemplated the pig in silent wonder, and Ristabilito clicked his tongue appreciatively against his palate. Ciávola asked, "What are you going to do with it?"

"Salt it down," replied La Bravetta, in a voice which trembled with greedy delight of future banquets.

"Going to salt it?" cried Ristabilito suddenly. "Going to salt it? But, Ciá, did you ever see any man so stupid as this fellow? To let such a chance slip!"

La Bravetta, quite dumbfounded, stared first at one and then at the other with his calf-like eyes.

"Donna Pelagia has always kept you under her thumb," continued Ristabilito. "This time she can't see you; why shouldn't you sell the pig, and then we'll feast on the money."

"But Pelagia?" stammered La Bravetta, who was filled with an

immense consternation by the image of his wrathful wife presented to his mind's eye.

"Tell her that the pig was stolen," said Ciávola, with a gesture of impatience.

La Bravetta shuddered.

"How am I to go home and tell her that? Pelagia won't believe me—she'll drive me—she'll . . . You don't know what Pelagia is!"

"Uh! Pelagia! uh! uh! Donna Pelagia!" jeered the two arch-plotters in chorus. And then Ristabilito, imitating Peppe's whining voice, and his wife's sharp and strident one, acted a comic scene in which Peppe was utterly routed, scolded, and finally cuffed like a naughty boy.

Ciávola walked round the pig, scarcely able to move for laughing. The unfortunate butt, seized with a violent fit of sneezing, waved his arms helplessly, trying to interrupt the dramatic representation. All the window-panes trembled with the noise. The flaming sunset streamed in on three very different human faces.

When Ristabilito stopped, Ciávola said:

"Well, let's go away!"

"If you'll stay to have supper——" began Mastro Peppe, somewhat constrainedly.

"No, no, my dear boy," interrupted Ciávola, as he turned towards the door, "you do as Pelagia tells you, and salt the pig."

As the two friends walked along the road Ristabilito said to Ciávola:

"*Compare*, shall we steal that pig to-night?"

"How?" said Ciávola.

"I know how, if they leave it where it was when we saw it."

"Well, let's do it. But, then?" said Ciávola.

The other's whole face lit up, and fairly vibrated with a grin of delight.

"Never mind—I know," was all he said.

They saw Don Bergamino Camplone coming along in the moonlight—a black figure between the rows of leafless poplars with their silvery trunks. They immediately quickened their pace to meet him; and the jolly priest, seeing their festive looks, asked with a smile:

"What's up now?"

The friends briefly communicated their project to Don Bergamino, who assented with much cheerfulness. And Ristabilito added, in a low voice:

"Here we shall have to marriage things cunningly. You know that Peppe, ever since he took up with that ugly old hag of a Donna

Pelagia, has been getting very stingy, and at the same time he's very fond of wine. Now we must go and fetch him and take him to Assau's tavern. You, Don Bergamino, must treat us all round. Peppe will drink as much as ever he can, seeing it costs him nothing, and will get as drunk as a pig; and then——"

The others agreed, and they went to Peppe's house, which was about two rifle-shots distant. When they were near enough Ciávola lifted up his voice:

"Ohé! La Bravetta-a-a! Are you coming to Assau's? The priest is here, and he's going to pay for a bottle of wine for us. Ohé-é-é!"

La Bravetta was not long in descending, and all four set off in a row, joking and laughing in the moonlight. In the stillness the caterwauling of a distant cat was heard at intervals, and Ristabilito remarked:

"Oh! Pé! don't you hear Pelagia calling you to come back?"

They crossed the ferry, reached the tavern, and sat till late over Assau's wine, which Mastro Peppe found so good that he was at last discovered to be incapable of walking home. They assisted him back to the house and left him to go upstairs alone, which he did with some difficulty, talking disconnectedly all the time about Lepruccio the butcher and the quantity of salt needed for the pig, and quite oblivious of the fact that he had left the door unfastened. They waited a while, and then, entering softly, found the pig on the table, and carried it off between them, shaking with suppressed laughter. It was very heavy, and they were quite out of breath when they reached the priest's house.

In the morning, Mastro Peppe having slept off his wine, awoke, and lay still a little while on his bed, stretching his limbs and listening to the bells as they rang for the Eve of St. Anthony. Even in the confusion of his first awakening he felt a contented sense of possession steal through his mind, and tasted by anticipation the delight of seeing Lepruccio cutting up and covering with salt the plump joints of pork.

Under the impulse of this idea, he rose, and hurried out, rubbing his eyes the while to get a better view. Nothing was to be seen on the table but a stain of blood, with the morning sun shining on it.

"The pig! Where is the pig?" cried the bereaved one hoarsely.

A furious excitement seized upon him. He rushed downstairs, saw the open door, struck his forehead with his fists, and burst into the open air yelling aloud—calling all his farm-labourers round him,

and asking them if they had seen the pig—if they had taken it. He multiplied his complaints, raising his voice more and more; and at last the doleful sound, echoing along the river-bank, reached the ears of Ciávola and Il Ristabilito.

They therefore repaired to the spot at their ease, fully agreed to enjoy the sight and keep up the joke. When they came in sight, Mastro Peppe turned to them, all afflicted and in tears, and exclaimed, "Oh, poor me! They have stolen the pig! Oh! poor me! What shall I do?—what shall I do?"

Biagio Quaglia stood for a while, looking at this most unhappy man out of his half-shut eyes, with an expression midway between derision and admiration, and his head inclined to one shoulder, as if critically judging of some dramatic effort. Then he came closer and said:

"Ah! yes, yes—one can't deny it. . . . You play your part well."

Peppe, not understanding, lifted his face all furrowed with the tracks of tears. . . .

"To tell the truth, I never thought you would have been so cute," Ristabilito went on. "Well done! Bravo! I'm delighted!"

"What's that you're saying?" asked La Bravetta between his sobs. "What's that you're saying? Oh! poor me! How can I ever go home again?"

"Bravo! bravo! that's right!" insisted Ristabilito. "Go on! Yell harder!—cry!—tear your hair! Make them hear! That's it! Make him believe it!"

And Peppe, still weeping:

"But I say they have really and truly stolen it! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"That's it! Go on! Don't stop! Again!"

Peppe, quite beside himself with exasperation and grief, redoubled his asseverations.

"I'm telling the truth! May I die now, at once, if they haven't stolen that pig from me!"

"Oh, poor innocent!" jeered Ciávola. "Put your finger in your eye! How can we believe you, when we saw the pig here yesterday evening? Has St. Anthony given him wings to fly away with?"

"Oh, blessed St. Anthony! It is just as I say!"

"It's not so!"

"It is."

"No!"

"Oh! oh! oh! It is! it is! I'm a dead man! I don't know how in the world I am to go home." Pelagia won't believe me,

and if she does, I shall never hear the end of it. . . . Oh ! I'm dead ! . . . "

At last they pretended to be convinced, and proposed a remedy for the misfortune.

" Listen here," said Biagio Quaglia ; " it must have been one of the people hereabouts ; for it is certain that no one would have come from India to steal your pig, would they, Pé ? "

" Of course, of course," assented Peppe.

" Well then—attend to me now," continued Ristabilito, delighted at the devout attention accorded to his words ; " if no one came from India to rob you, it is certain that one of the people hereabouts must have been the thief ; don't you think so ? "

" Yes, yes."

" Well, what have we to do ? We must get all these labourers together, and try some charm to discover the thief. And if we find the thief, we've found the pig."

Mastro Peppe's eyes brightened with eagerness, and he came closer, for the hint at a charm had awakened all his innate superstition.

" Now, you know, there are three kinds of magic—the black, the red, and the white. And you know there are three women in the village skilled in the art : Rosa Schiavona, Rosaria Pajara, and Ciniscia. You have only to choose."

Peppe remained a moment in doubt. Then he decided for Rosaria Pajara, who enjoyed great fame as a sorceress, and had in past times performed several marvellous feats.

" Very well," concluded Ristabilito ; " there is no time to be lost. Now, just for your sake, and only to do you a pleasure, I am going to the town to get everything that will be wanted. I will talk to Rosaria, get her to give me everything and come back before noon. Give me the money."

Peppe took three *carlini* from his waistcoat pocket, and held them out hesitatingly.

" Three *carlini* ? " shouted the other, putting back his hand. " Three *carlini* ! She'll want ten at least ! "

On hearing this Pelagia's husband was almost struck dumb.

" What ? Ten *carlini* for a charm ? " he stammered, feeling with trembling fingers in his pocket. " Here are eight for you. I have no more."

" Well, well," said Quaglia drily ; " we'll see what we can do. Are you coming along, Ciá ? "

The two companions set off at a smart pace for Pescara, along the poplar-bordered path, in Indian file, Ciávola demonstrating his delight by mighty thumps on Ristabilito's back. When they reached the town, they entered the shop of a certain Don Daniele

Pacentro, a chemist of their acquaintance. Here they purchased certain drugs and spices, and got him to make them up into little balls the size of walnuts, which were then well coated with sugar and baked. Biagio Quaglia (who had disappeared in the meantime) then returned with a paper full of dirt swept up in the road, of which he insisted on having two pills made, in appearance exactly similar to the others, but mixed with bitter aloes, and only very slightly coated with sugar. The chemist did as he was desired, putting a mark on the two bitter pills, at Ristabilito's suggestion.

The two jokers now returned to Peppe's farm, and reached it about noon. La Bravetta was awaiting them with great anxiety, and as soon as he saw them shouted, "Well?"

"Everything is in order!" replied Ristabilito triumphantly, showing the little box of magic confectionery. "Now, seeing to-day is the Eve of St. Anthony, and the peasants are taking a holiday, you must call them all together, out here in the open air, and give them a drink. You have some casks of Montepulciano; you might as well have some of that out for once. And when they are all assembled it will be my business to do and say all that has to be said and done."

Two hours later, the afternoon being very warm, bright, and clear, and La Bravetta having spread the report, all the farmers of the neighbourhood and their labourers came in response to the invitation. A great flock of geese went waddling about among the heaps of straw in the yard; the smell of the stable came in puffs on the air. They stood there, quietly laughing and joking with one another, as they waited for the wine,—these rustics, with their bow-legs, bent by heavy labour,—some of them with faces wrinkled and ruddy as old apples, and eyes that had been made gentle by long patience, or quick with years of cunning; others young and limber, with beards just coming, and home care evidenced in their patched and mended clothes.

Ciávola and Ristabilito did not keep them waiting long. The latter, holding the box in his hand, directed them to make a circle round him, and then, standing in the middle, addressed them in a short oration, not without a certain gravity of voice and gesture.

"Neighbours," he began, "none of you, I am sure, knows the real reason why Mastro Peppe de' Sieri has summoned you here. . . ."

A movement of astonishment at this strange preamble passed round the circle, and the joy at the promised wine gave place to uneasy expectations of various kinds. The orator continued:

"But, as something disagreeable might happen, and you might

afterwards complain of me, I will tell you what it is all about before we make the experiment."

The listeners looked into one another's eyes with a bewildered air, and then cast curious and uncertain glances at the little box which the orator held in his hand. One of them, as Ristabilito paused to consider the effect of his words, exclaimed impatiently:

"Well?"

"Presently, presently, neighbours. Last night there was stolen from Mastro Peppe a fine pig which was going to be salted down. No one knows who the thief is; but it is quite certain that he will be found among you, because no one would come from India to steal Mastro Peppe's pig."

Whether it was a happy effect of the strange argument from India, or the action of the mild winter sun, La Bravetta began to sneeze. The rustics took a step backward, the whole flock of geese scattered in terror, and seven consecutive sneezes resounded freely in the air, disturbing the rural stillness of the spot. The noise restored some cheerfulness to the minds of the assembly, who in a little while regained their composure, and Ristabilito continued as gravely as ever—

"To find out the thief Mastro Peppe intends to give you to eat of certain good *confetti*, and to drink of a certain old Montepulciano, which he has tapped to-day on purpose. But I must tell you one thing first. The thief, as soon as he puts the sweets into his mouth, will find them bitter—so bitter that he will be forced to spit them out. Now, are you willing to try? Or perhaps the thief, rather than be found out in this way, would like to go and confess himself to the priest? Answer, neighbours."

"We are willing to eat and drink," replied the assembly, almost with one voice. And a wave of suppressed emotion passed through all these guileless folk. Each one looked at his neighbour with a point of interrogation in his eyes; and each one naturally tried to put a certain ostentatious spontaneity into his laughter.

Said Ciávola: "You must all stand in a row, so that no one can hide himself."

When they were all ready he took the bottle and glasses, preparing to pour out the wine. Ristabilito went to one end of the row, and began quietly to distribute the *confetti*, which crunched and disappeared in a moment under the splendid teeth of the rustics. When he reached Mastro Peppe he handed him one of the pills prepared with aloes, and passed on without giving any sign.

Mastro Peppe, who till then had been standing staring with his eyes wide open, intent on surprising the culprit, put the pill into his mouth almost with gluttonous eagerness and began to chew. Suddenly his cheeks rose with a sudden movement towards his eyes,

the corners of his mouth and his temples were filled with wrinkles, the skin of his nose was drawn up into folds, his lower jaw was twisted awry ; all his features formed a pantomimic expression of horror, and a sort of visible shudder ran down the back of his neck and over his shoulders. Then, suddenly, since the tongue could not endure the bitterness of the aloes, and a lump rising in his throat made it simply impossible for him to swallow, the miserable man was forced to spit.

" Ohé, Mastro Pé, what are you doing ? " exclaimed the sharp, harsh voice of Tulespre dei Passeri, an old goatherd, greenish and shaggy as a swamp tortoise.

Hearing this, Ristabilito, who had not yet finished distributing the pills, turned suddenly round. Seeing that La Bravetta was contorting his features and limbs in agony, he said, with an air of the greatest benevolence—

" Well, perhaps that one was too much done ! Here is another ! swallow it, Peppe ! "

And with his finger and thumb he crammed the second aloes-pill into Peppe's mouth.

The poor man took it, and, feeling the goatherd's sharp, malignant eyes fixed on him, made a supreme effort to overcome his disgust ; he neither chewed nor swallowed the pill, but kept his tongue motionless against his teeth. But when the aloes began to dissolve, he could bear it no longer ; his lips began to writhe as before, his eyes filled with tears, which soon overflowed and ran down his cheeks. At last he had to spit the thing out.

" Ohé, Mastro Pé, and what are you doing *now* ? " cried the goatherd again, with a grin which showed his toothless, whitish gums. " Oh ! and indeed, now, what does this mean ? "

All the peasants broke from their ranks and surrounded La Bravetta, some with laughing derision, others with angry words. The sudden and brutal revulsions of pride to which the sense of honour of the rustic population is subject—the implacable rigidity of superstition—now suddenly exploded in a tempest of abuse.

" What did you make us come here for ? To try and lay the blame on us with a false charm ? To cheat us ? What for ? Thief ! liar ! son of a dog ! Would you cheat us ? You scoundrel, you thief, you ! We are going to break all your pots and dishes ! Thief ! son of a dog ! "

Having smashed the bottle and glasses, they went their ways, shouting, back their concluding imprecations from among the poplars.

There remained on the threshing-floor Ciávola, Ristabilito, the geese, and La Bravetta. The latter, filled with shame, rage, and

confusion, and with his mouth still sore from the bitterness of the aloes, could not utter a word. Ristabilito, with a refinement of cruelty, stood looking at him, shaking his head ironically, and tapping the ground with his foot. Ciávola crowed, with an indescribable mockery in his voice—

“Ah! ah! ah! ah! Bravo, La Bravetta! Now do tell us—how much did you make by it? Ten ducats?”

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

THE END OF CANDIA

THREE days after the Easter banquet, which was traditionally a great occasion in the Lamonica household, both in its lavishness and in the number of its guests, Donna Cristina Lamonica was counting the table linen and silver service, and replacing them one by one, methodically, in drawer and cupboard, in readiness for future banquets.

As usual, she had with her, to help in the task, the chambermaid, Maria Bisaccia, and the laundress, Candida Marcanda, familiarly known as Candia. The huge hampers, filled with fine linen, stood in a row upon the floor. The silver platters and other table service gleamed brightly from the sideboard—massive vessels, somewhat crudely wrought by rustic silversmiths, and of more or less liturgical design, like all the plate which rich provincial families hand down from generation to generation. A fresh fragrance of soapy water pervaded the room.

From the hampers Candia took tablecloths, napkins, and towels ; she made the mistress take note that each piece was intact, and then passed them over to Maria, who laid them away in the drawers, while the mistress sprinkled lavender between them and entered the numbers in a book. Candia was a tall, lean, angular woman of fifty, with back somewhat bent from the habitual attitude of her calling, with arms of unusual length, and the head of a bird of prey mounted on a turtle's neck. Maria Bisaccia was a native of Ortona, a trifle stout, with a fresh complexion and the clearest of eyes ; she had a soft fashion of speech, and the light, leisurely touch of one whose hands were almost always busy over cakes and syrups, pastry and preserves. Donna Cristina, also an Ortonese, and educated in a Benedictine convent, was of small stature, with a somewhat too generous expanse of bosom, a face overstrewn with freckles, a large, long nose, poor teeth, and handsome eyes cast downward in a way that made one think of a priest in woman's clothing.

The three women were performing their task with the utmost care, giving up to it the greater part of the afternoon. All at once, just as Candia was leaving with the empty baskets, Donna Cristina, in

the course of counting the small silver, found that a spoon was missing.

"Maria! Maria!" she cried, in utter dismay, "count these! There's a spoon missing! Count them yourself!"

"But how could it be? That's impossible, Signora!" replied Maria, "let me have a look." And she in turn began to count the small pieces, telling off the numbers aloud, while Donna Cristina looked on, shaking her head. The silver gave forth a clear, ringing sound.

"Well, it's a fact!" Maria exclaimed at last, with a gesture of despair; "what's to be done about it!"

She herself was safe from all suspicion. For fifteen years she had given proofs of her fidelity and honesty in this very household. She had come from Ortona together with Donna Cristina at the time of the wedding, almost as though she were a part of the marriage settlement; and from the first she had acquired a certain authority in the house, through the indulgence of her mistress. She was full of religious superstitions, devoted to the saint and the belfry of her birthplace, and possessed of great shrewdness. She and her mistress had formed a sort of offensive alliance against Pescara and all pertaining to it, and more particularly against the saint of the Pescaraese. She never missed a chance to talk of her native town, to vaunt its beauty and its riches, the splendour of its basilica, the treasures of San Tommaso, the magnificence of its religious ceremonies, as compared with the poverty of San Cetto, that possessed only one single little silver cross.

Donna Cristina said:

"Take a good look in there."

Maria left the room to extend the search. She explored every nook and corner of the kitchen and the balcony; but in vain. She came back empty-handed.

"It isn't there! It isn't there!"

Then the two together tried to think, to make conjectures, to ransack their memories. They went out upon the balcony that communicated with the court, the balcony back of the laundry, to make one last research. As they talked together in loud tones, women's heads began to appear at the windows of the surrounding houses.

"What has happened, Donna Cristina? Tell us about it."

Donna Cristina and Maria related the occurrence with many words and many gestures.

"Lord, Lord! Then there have been thieves here?"

In a moment the report of the theft had spread through the neighbourhood, through all Pescara. Men and women fell to discussing, to imagining who could have been the thief. By the time

the news had reached the most distant houses of Sant' Agostino it had gathered volume ; it was no longer a question of a mere spoon, but of all the silver plate in the house of Lamonica.

Now, since the weather was fine and roses were beginning to bloom upon the balcony, and a pair of linnets were singing in their cage, the women lingered at their windows, for the pleasure of gossiping across the grateful warmth of the outdoor air. Female heads continued to appear from behind the pots of sweet basil, and a chatter arose that must have rejoiced the cats upon the house-tops.

Clasping her hands, Donna Cristina asked : " Who could it have been ? "

Donna Isabella Sertale, nicknamed the Pole-cat, who had the lithe and stealthy movements of a beast of prey, asked in a strident voice : " Who did you have with you, Donna Cristina ? It seems to me that I saw Candia on her way —— "

" Aha ! " exclaimed Donna Felicetta Margasanta, nicknamed the Magpie because of her continuous garrulity. " Aha ! " repeated the other gossips. — " And you hadn't thought of it ? " — " And you never noticed ? " — " And you don't know about Candia ? " — " We can tell you about Candia ! " — " Indeed we can ! " — " Oh yes, we can tell you about her ! "

" She washes clothes well, there is no denying it. She is the best laundress in Pescara, there's no question about it. But the trouble with her is that she is too light-fingered—didn't you know that, my dear ? "

" She got a couple of towels from me once." — " And a napkin from me." — " And a night-gown from me." — " And three pairs of stockings from me." — " And a new petticoat from me." — " And I never got them back again." — " Nor I." — " Nor I."

" But I didn't discharge her. Whom could I get ? Silvestra ? "

" Oh ! oh ! "

" Angelantonio ? The African ? "

" Each one worse than the other ! "

" We must put up with it."

" But it's a spoon this time ! "

" That's a little too much ! "

" Don't you let it pass, Donna Cristina, don't you let it pass ! "

" Let it pass, or not let it pass ! " burst forth Maria Bisaccia, who, in spite of her placid and benign appearance, never let an opportunity pass for displaying her superiority over her fellow-servants. " That is for us to decide, Donna Isabella, that is for us to decide ! "

And the chatter continued to flow back and forth from windows to balcony. And the accusation spread from lip to lip throughout the whole countryside.

II

The following morning, Candia Marcanda already had her arms in a tubful of clothes, when the village constable, Biagio Pesce, nicknamed the Little Corporal, appeared at her door.

"His Honour, the mayor, wants you up at his office, at once," he told the laundress.

"What's that?" demanded Candia, wrinkling her brows into a frown, yet without interrupting the task before her.

"His Honour, the mayor, wants you up at his office, at once."

"Wants me? What does he want me for?" Candia demanded rather sharply, for she was at a loss to understand this unexpected summons, and it turned her as stubborn as a horse balking at a shadow.

"I can't tell you what for," replied the Little Corporal, "those were my orders."

"What were your orders?" From an obstinacy that was natural to her, she would not cease from asking questions. She could not convince herself that it was a reality. "The mayor wants me? What for? What have I done, I should like to know? I'm not going. I haven't done anything."

The Little Corporal, losing his temper, answered: "Oh, you won't go, won't you? We'll see about that!" and he went off, muttering, with his hand upon the hilt of the ancient sword he wore.

Meanwhile there were others along the narrow street who had overheard the conversation and came out upon their doorsteps, where they could watch Candia vigorously working her arms up and down in the tubful of clothes. And since they knew about the silver spoon, they laughed meaningly and interchanged ambiguous phrases, which Candia could not understand. But this laughter and these phrases awoke a vague foreboding in the woman's mind. And this foreboding gathered strength when the Little Corporal reappeared, accompanied by another officer.

"Come on!" said the Little Corporal peremptorily.

Candia wiped her arms, without replying, and went with them. In the public square, people stopped to look. One of her enemies, Rosa Panura, called out from the door of her shop, with a hateful laugh: "Drop your stolen bone!"

The laundress, dazed by this persecution for which she could find no reason, was at a loss for a reply.

Before the mayor's office a group of curious idlers had gathered to watch her as she went in. Candia, in an access of anger, mounted the steps in a rush and burst into the mayor's presence, breathlessly demanding: "Well, what is it you want of me?"

Don Silla, a man of peaceful proclivities, was for the moment

perturbed by the laundress's strident tones, and cast a glance at the two faithful custodians of his official dignity. Then, taking a pinch of tobacco from his horn snuff-box, he said to her, "My daughter, be seated."

But Candia remained standing. Her beak-like nose was inflated with anger, and her wrinkled cheeks quivered curiously. "Tell me, Don Silla."

"You went yesterday to take back the wash to Donna Cristina Lamonica?"

"Well, and what of it? What of it? Was there anything missing? All of it counted, piece by piece—and not a thing missing. What's the matter with it now?"

"Wait a moment, my daughter! In the same room there was the table silver——"

Candia, comprehending, turned like an angry hawk, about to swoop upon its prey. Her thin lips twitched convulsively.

"The silver was in the room, and Donna Cristina found that a spoon was missing. Do you understand, my daughter? Could you have taken it—by mistake?"

Candia jumped like a grasshopper before the injustice of this accusation. As a matter of fact she had stolen nothing.

"Oh, it was I, was it? I? Who says so? Who saw me? I am astonished at you, Don Silla! I am astonished at you! I, a thief? I? I?"

And there was no end to her indignation. She was all the more keenly stung by the unjust charge, because she knew herself to be capable of the action they attributed to her.

"Then it was you who took it?" interrupted Don Silla, prudently sinking back into the depths of his spacious judicial chair.

"I am astonished at you!" snarled the woman once more, waving her long arms around as though they had been two sticks.

"Very well, you may go. We will see about it."

Candia went out without a salutation, blindly bumping into the doorpost. She was beside herself. As she set foot in the street and saw the crowd which had gathered, she realised that already public opinion was against her; that no one was going to believe in her innocence. Nevertheless, she began to utter a vociferous denial. The crowd continued to laugh as it dispersed. Full of fury, she returned home, and hopelessly began to weep upon her doorstep.

Don Donato Brandimarte, who lived next door, said mockingly: "Cry louder, cry louder! There are people passing by!"

Since there were heaps of clothing still waiting for the suds, she finally calmed herself, bared her arms, and resumed her task. As she worked, she thought out her denials, elaborated a whole system

of defence, sought out in her shrewd woman's brain an ingenious method of establishing her innocence ; racking her brain for specious subtleties, she had recourse to every trick of rustic dialectic to construct a line of reasoning that would convince the most incredulous.

Then, when her day's work was ended, she went out, deciding to go first to see Donna Cristina.

Donna Cristina was not to be seen. It was Maria Bisaccia who listened to Candia's flood of words, shaking her head but answering nothing, and withdrawing in dignified silence.

Next, Candia made the circuit of all her clients. To each in turn she related the occurrence, to each she unfolded her defence, continually adding some new argument, amplifying her words, growing constantly more excited, more desperate, in the face of incredulity and distrust. And all in vain ; she felt that from now on there was no further defence possible. A sort of blind hopelessness took possession of her—what more was there to do ? What more was there to say ?

III

Meanwhile Donna Cristina Lamonica gave orders to send for Cinigia, a woman of the people, who practised magic and empirical medicine with considerable success. Cinigia had several times before discovered stolen goods ; and it was said that she was secretly in league with the thieves.

"Find that spoon for me," Donna Cristina told her, "and you shall have a big reward."

"Very well," Cinigia replied ; "twenty-four hours are all I need."

And twenty-four hours later she brought back her answer ; the spoon was to be found in a hole in the courtyard, near the well.

Donna Cristina and Maria descended to the courtyard, made search, and, to their great amazement, found the spoon.

Swiftly the news spread throughout Pescara.

Then triumphantly Candia Marcanda went the rounds of all the streets. She seemed to have grown taller ; she held her head erect ; she smiled, looking every one straight in the eye, as if to say, "I told you so ! I told you so !"

The people in the shops, seeing her pass by, would murmur something and then break forth into a significantly sneering laugh. Filippo La Selvi, who sat drinking a glass of liqueur brandy in the Café d' Ange, called Candia in.

"Another glass for Candia, the same as mine !"

The woman, who was fond of strong spirits, pursed up her lips covetously.

"You certainly deserve it, there's no denying that!" added Filippo La Selvi.

An idle crowd had gathered in front of the café. They all had the spirit of mischief in their faces. While the woman drank, Filippo La Selvi turned and addressed his audience:

"She knew how to work it, didn't she? Isn't she a clever one?" and he slapped the laundress familiarly upon her bony shoulder.

The crowd laughed. A little dwarf, called Magnafave, or "Big Beans," weak-minded and stuttering, joined the forefinger of his right hand to that of his left, and striking a grotesque attitude and dwelling upon each syllable, said:

"Ca—ca—ca—Candia—Ci—ci—Cinigia!" and he continued to make gestures and to stammer forth vulgar witticisms, all implying that Candia and Cinigia were in league together. His spectators indulged in contortions of merriment.

For a moment Candia sat there bewildered, with the glass still in her hand. Then in a flash she understood—they did not believe in her innocence. They accused her of having brought back the silver spoon secretly, by agreement with the sorceress, to save herself further trouble.

An access of blind anger came upon her. Speechless with passion, she flung herself upon the weakest of them, upon the little hunchback, in a hurricane of blows and scratches. And the crowd, at the sight of this struggle, formed a circle and jeered at them in cruel glee, as at a fight between two animals, and egged on the two combatants with voice and gesture.

Big Beans, badly scared by her unexpected violence, tried to escape, hopping about like a little ape; and held fast by the laundress's terrible arms, whirled round and round with increasing velocity, like a stone in a sling, until at last he fell violently upon his face.

Some of the men hastened to pick him up. Candia withdrew in the midst of hisses, shut herself within her house, and flung herself across her bed, sobbing and gnawing her fingers, in the keenness of her suffering. The new accusation cut her deeper than the first, and all the more that she knew herself capable of such a subterfuge. How was she to clear herself now? How was she to establish the truth? She grew hopeless as she realised that she could not allege in defence any material difficulties that might have interfered with carrying out the deception. Access to the courtyard was perfectly simple; a door, that was never fastened, opened from the ground floor of the main stairway; people came and went freely through that door, to remove the garbage, or for other causes. So it was impossible for her to close the lips of her accusers by saying, "How

could I have got in ? " The means of successfully carrying out such a plan were many and easy.

Candia proceeded to conjure up new arguments to convince them ; she sharpened up her wits ; she invented three, four, five different cases to prove that the spoon never could have been found in that hole in the courtyard ; she split hairs with marvellous ingenuity. Next she took to making the rounds of the shops and the houses, seeking in every possible way to overcome the people's incredulity. They listened to her, greatly entertained by her captious reasoning ; and they would end by saying, " Oh, it's all right ! "

But there was a certain tone in their voice that left Candia annihilated. So, then, all her trouble was for nothing ! No one would believe her ! Yet with marvellous persistence she would return to the attack, spending whole nights in thinking out new arguments. And little by little, under this continued strain, her mind gave way ; she could no longer follow any sustained thought but that of the silver spoon.

Neglecting her work, she had sunk to a state of actual want. When she went down to the river bank, under the iron bridge, where the other wash-women congregated, she would sometimes let slip from between her fingers garments that the current swept away for ever. And she would talk continually, unweariedly, of the one single subject. In order not to hear her, the young laundresses would begin to sing, and would mock her with the improvised rhymes of their songs. And she meanwhile would shout and gesticulate like a crazy woman.

No one could give her work any longer. Out of pity, some of her former employers would send her food. Little by little she fell into the habit of begging, and wandered through the streets, bowed over, unkempt, and all in rags. The street urchins would run behind her, shouting : " Tell us the story of the spoon, 'cause we never heard it, Auntie Candia ! "

She would stop strangers sometimes as they passed by, to tell them the story and to argue out her defence. Young fellows would sometimes send for her, and pay her a copper to tell it all over, two, three, or four times ; they would raise up difficulties against her arguments ; they would hear her all the way through, and at last stab her with a final word. She would shake her head, and go on her way ; she found companionship among other beggars and would reason with them endlessly, indefatigably, invincibly. Her chosen friend was a deaf woman, whose skin was a mass of angry blotches, and who limped on one leg.

In the winter of 1874 she was at last stricken with serious illness. The woman with the blotches cared for her. Donna Cristina Lamonica sent her a cordial and a scuttle of coals.

The sick woman, lying on her pallet, still raved of the silver spoon. She would raise herself on her elbow and struggle to wave her arm, to give emphasis to her fevered arguments.

And at last, when her staring eyes already seemed overspread with a veil of troubled waters that rose from within, Candia gasped forth :

“ It wasn’t I, madam—because you see—the spoon—— ! ”

SALVATORE FARINA

1846—

SEPARATION

I

My room in the Via Bagutta was really situated a little higher than was necessary. I said it to myself every day, for I had so often to climb the hundred and twelve stairs that separated me from the world below ; but whenever I reached the top, and gazed through the window over the splendid panorama of roofs and chimneys, I so much enjoyed the view that I remained living there. I made the acquaintance of all my neighbours ; and among a bachelor's neighbours there are sure to be some from whom it is better to keep aloof.

Thus I made the acquaintance of the most eccentric married couple that can be imagined. If I were to say that Signor Sulpicio and Signora Concetta were each the actual half corresponding to the other, the statement need hardly be metaphorically taken ; for, in truth, both of them together owned only as much flesh and muscle as usually belong to one ordinary mortal. If their years were added together, their sum was considerably over that of a century and a half. And if I imagined to myself—a funny, but not improper notion—Signora Concetta standing on her husband's head, it seemed to me as if the worthy lady would just touch, or, perhaps, even project, a very little beyond the ceiling ; and my room was only three and a half yards high.

After the establishment of these mathematical proportions, it will be easy for the reader to form a picture of this couple ; and they will live in his memory as in mine, a pair of lank, haggard thin forms, grey-headed, their faces furrowed with wrinkles, and their eyes sunk and sparkling.

For fifty-five years they had shared bed and board and all the vicissitudes of life with one another ; they had so grown into one another, and had so lived themselves one into another, even their faces, with the exception of their noses, had grown like one another, that they might easily have been taken for brother and sister. But those noses, those noses ! They had obstinately retained their own

original shape ; and I must confess that never in my life did I see two more differently shaped noses. The man's was hooked—eagle-fashion—as though inquisitively to watch whatever entered the mouth ; while the woman's was small and retreating, as though it stepped aside to leave the way to her mouth open for a good morsel. This simile was not made by me in the first instance, but had its origin with the couple.

It happened at dinner fifty-four years and eleven months ago, in an unfortunate moment of mutual anger about some sauce that tasted of smoke.

This was the first cloud that appeared on the fair sky of their conjugal happiness ; but it was an ugly dark cloud, and it mounted from the sauce into their noses, from their noses into their heads, from their heads into their minds. At last they discovered that never on this earth had a married pair more unwillingly borne the burden of the conjugal yoke than they. Concetta spoke of returning to her relatives, and Sulpicio wished her to go at once ; but considering that they were on their wedding journey, and that Concetta's relatives lived two hundred miles away from the scene of this first matrimonial quarrel, the execution of this plan was, for the time being, deferred.

But " Separation " was, and remained, the password between them. Next day it occurred to Sulpicio that his companion had been entrusted to him as a maiden treasure ; he remembered a touching conversation which he had had with his father-in-law ; he bethought him of his vow to make her happy ; a whole host of good thoughts and wise resolves rose up in his soul, and at length brought him to the conviction that it was his place to persuade Concetta not to forsake the domestic hearth.

Concetta, too, on the whole a sensible woman, thought of her mother's advice ; of the vow she had taken at the altar ; of the envy of her friends who remained unmarried ; of the secret joy and pretended pity of her youthful companions. Then she considered that Sulpicio was not really a bad man, and that it was only the unfortunate smoky sauce that was at fault in the whole matter.

When Sulpicio approached her with his pleasantest smile, Concetta also met him with her pleasantest manner ; they pressed each other's hands, embraced warmly, and peace was concluded.

But in their hearts there remained the consciousness that they had made trial of one another. This trial was followed by others no less stormy ; and lodgers on the fourth floor in the Via Bagutta, and sometimes the whole neighbourhood, were occasionally witnesses to sudden shrieking sounds.

"That is Concetta," the people would say. It was Concetta. After the unfortunate victim had vainly cast at her tyrant's head all the flattering terms she had collected during the last fifty-five years, without being able to trump his supply, she would finish by giving a terrible scream. At the end of such scenes old Sulpicio generally fled downstairs, so that Concetta sent her last abusive words after him from one of the steps.

Then the good neighbours came to her assistance. They let her talk till the attack of rage was over; then they joined in her lamentation, and pitied her, and declared her fate to be undeserved, and her husband a brute. Suddenly she seemed quieted, and then she contradicted everyone most passionately, and defended her Sulpicio with incredible warmth, whom she alone could understand, whose heart only she could read, and who was really better than anyone else.

When the attack was over, and the landing cleared again, the old woman crept quietly and secretly back into their apartment, and buried her trembling head in a large black-silk hood; thereupon she descended two flights of stairs, and knocked at the door of Madame Nina, who lived with a weak-headed uncle, a friend of Sulpicio's. Concetta knew that her husband thought very highly of the young woman; yet she was so far from being jealous of her, that she even made use of her assistance in re-establishing peace.

Almost at the same moment the husband returned secretly to the house, came panting up the stairs, and burst into my room. As he knew that Concetta cherished almost motherly feelings towards me, and that a word from me would go a long way with her, he did me the troublesome honour of entrusting me with the restoration of his domestic peace.

II

From me this office of peacemaker required no great sacrifice, nor from Nina either, I believe.

As soon as Concetta saw me, she met me cordially, seized my hand in both hers, and by mutely nodding her head and casting up her eyes, she declared to me all her sorrow for what had occurred, her intention of returning to her conjugal duties, and her gratitude for my successful efforts. It was evident that neither could Concetta live without her Sulpicio, nor Sulpicio without his Concetta. They loved each other, as they had always loved each other; and in spite of being ever ready to quarrel, they loved as much as any two people can love.

As I had expected, as soon as Sulpicio appeared at the door after his conversion, hiding his emotion from me by assumed indifference, Concetta would have given him any atonement in her power, and in her confusion she sought through all her pockets for her thimble and needle-case.

Meantime I occupied myself with the lock of the door, or looked out of the window, or examined some book or picture. Then the two came a little nearer to one another; my backward glances revealed two trembling hands that pressed one another, two faces sparkling with glad smiles, and two tears rolling down along the furrows of the wrinkles. At last they fell into each other's arms. I then looked elsewhere, or I turned round as if accidentally and said that it was beautiful weather—unless it happened to be pouring with rain; but I thought to myself that in those tears youth had come back to life, and that these smiles were well worthy the rosy cheeks and foreheads of spring.

But one day the storm raged so terribly that the diplomatic transactions lasted many hours, and had to be very skilfully managed before the two ships could be got to run into the calm matrimonial harbour. The word "Separation" was pronounced by both parties with the greatest decision, and neither would give way.

In order to avoid any diplomatic transactions, both parties had left the house and gone in opposite directions. The servant, a half-silly little thing, whom the two old people had turned up somewhere and taken in, knew nothing except that her master and mistress had gone out one after another. I seated myself by the grate, stirred the fire, and awaited the events that might come. It was a beautiful winter's day, the sun shone brightly and the fire crackled merrily on the hearth.

My thoughts too were cheerful. I tried to guess which of the two would be the first to return to the domestic hearth. Who? Doubtless Concetta. Suddenly I heard a dress rustling! I rose, turned round, and saw before me—Signora Nina, the young widow from the third floor.

The lady seemed surprised to find me. She was the more embarrassed as she had entered with her usual easy familiarity; and to avoid the appearance of having committed an indiscretion, she acted as though she had not observed my presence, and thus made me understand that in so entering she had only made use of an old privilege. All the more I felt it to be my place to salute and address her; but she anticipated me.

"Is Signora Concetta not at home?" she asked.

"Neither she, nor Signor Sulpicio. I am waiting for both."

"And I wanted to speak to one of them. I will come again."

The information that both husband and wife had left the house seemed to make her anxious; still she remained.

"I really meant to wait, but I will come again."

"Thank you. Probably you come for——"

"For the same reason."

With these words I stepped a little aside, as though to invite her to remain. The next minute she was seated at my former place, near the fire, and I—did not go.

Signora Nina did not know me, but I knew her well. From my window, which was over hers, I had often examined the colour of her hair, and vainly hoped some time to be able to behold that of her eyes. Once I had sent her away by coughing; since then I had never coughed at the window. Now those little white hands, that I had once seen playing the scales, were resting on the mantelpiece, and I might openly look into that face which had hitherto been to me a veiled picture.

Yes, Nina was beautiful, at least she seemed so to me.

As I was still standing before her, she invited me, by a polite movement of her hand, to seat myself. I did so. One moment of silent expectation followed. No one came.

The silence began to become uncomfortable. She broke it by speaking of Sulpicio. I spoke of Concetta.

When I told her of the office whose duties I had faithfully fulfilled ever since I had the good fortune to be the neighbour of this couple, she smiled. What a beautiful smile! What splendid teeth!

"What a misfortune!" said she, after a short pause. "To live with one another fifty-five years without being able to understand each other!"

"An eternal fight and squabble! I have been a witness to it. But in reality they are fond of one another."

The widow's face showed a curious smile, but she did not answer.

"Such contradictions are like contrary winds," continued I, "which stir up wave after wave, and toss them up to the sky; then, when the storm is over, the sea becomes calm again, and once more shows the smooth surface of its clear waters. I scarcely think that two people could live with one another for any length of time without quarrelling."

Still the widow did not answer. She shook her head, and stirred impatiently among the ashes in the grate.

I was silent.

"What time is it?" asked she, as though she thought her silence offended me.

"Four o'clock."

"It is late. I must go. I will come again."

"By the right time, it is still thirteen minutes to four."

Nina smiled, and—did not go.

I did not know why, but in my heart there was a sound as of joy-bells.

Suddenly we saw Sulpicio and Concetta coming along hand-in-hand.

"Is peace restored?" both Nina and I inquired with our eyes.

"It is," answered husband and wife, in the same language.

"I had come to offer my congratulations on the peace," said the widow. "Now it is late, and I must go."

Concetta was in good spirits; her wrinkles revealed a kindly smile, and her eyes sparkled.

"It was not a bad thing that Signor Carlo kept you company," said she to the young widow.

Nina blushed, and I felt my heart beat faster.

She went, and soon after I took my leave.

The whole day long I only thought of Signora Nina, and only dreamt of her all night. All next morning I stood at the window to see her. I was fortunate enough to be observed by her, and to be allowed to bow to her. For a whole month I stood regularly at the window at the same time, and rejoiced in the same good fortune; now I smiled at her, now she at me. Seven months and eight days after I was permitted to press Signora Nina to my heart. She was no longer a widow.

III

We were happy. We inhabited a little house far removed from the noisy bustle of the town. Our windows did not open on to the dwellings of troublesome neighbours. We had the sun every day from morning to noon, and our new furniture shone in festive light.

She said her old uncle would on no consideration remain alone with his infirmities, and had gone to live with a sister in the town.

We were alone with our dreams, our plans, and thoughts; and that was sufficient for us. Any other society would only have been wearisome.

Our room was rose-coloured, like the happy spirits that presided over it. The future appeared to us as a beautiful dream. Nina was as graceful as she was dignified. She could smile so sweetly; her glance was as bright and as clear as the moon's beam; her voice was gentle and harmonious; and then she had such a be-

witching way of approaching me, laying her hands on my shoulders, and, without one spoken word, saying to me, "I love you!" that I could have gazed on her for hours, and devoured her with my eyes.

She had only one fault: she could not go from one room into another without banging the door behind her. Often, when I was startled from my thoughts and dreams by the slamming of a door, I was on the point of giving expression to the unpleasant sensation; but then I saw her rosy face, and was silent. None the less did it constantly irritate me, and I tried in vain to endure it more calmly.

I must testify to myself that I was an almost perfect husband to Nina. I left her alone as seldom as possible, and then only for a short time. I never contradicted her. I tried to anticipate all her wishes, always spoke kindly to her, and committed a thousand little absurdities to keep her in good humour. But I, too, had one little fault: I was terribly absent. Sometimes, when I was absorbed in some stupid thought, I did not notice that she, herself smiling, demanded a smile from me; and then I would answer some joking fancy by a serious shake of my head.

Certainly Fate, when it mated together two such serious faults, could not have intended to produce an image of conjugal peace.

One day I was even more absent, and she slammed the doors even more violently than usual; a loud "O!" escaped from me. She had heard it and I repented it. In vain. Next time Nina did not disturb my in my contemplation; she walked softly on tiptoe, and when she closed the door, she did it with the greatest care, to avoid making the least sound.

The roar of Vulcan's smithy would not have made me spring up faster from my chair. I rushed towards her, embraced and kissed her, and we laughed together in the fulness of our hearts.

But the ice was broken; a thought had come to open expression between us: we were not perfect. In spite of all her exertions, Nina did not succeed in curing herself of her fault; only as soon as she had committed it she assumed a half-sorry, half-teasing manner, which made her seem even more beautiful.

As for me, as often as my thoughts carried me away, I continued to shake my head and open my eyes wide; and so everything remained as before.

Our honeymoon lasted several months without the faintest shadow of a cloud resting on the brows of the lovers.

One day—it was one of those sultry July days on which the cruel hot sun mocks us—she swears to this day that she first said to me, "I should like to know in what you are always so deeply absorbed.

I really should like to know ! ” And would you believe it, honoured reader, I am said first to have offended her by a slight imprecation, which I did not notice myself until it was more than half out of my lips ? Yet, however that may be, one of us replied with a rude speech, the other with a somewhat ruder one, then now and then was added a touch of scorn and bitterness ; and at last Nina’s eyes were as full of tears as my heart of wounded pride.

Another time, the same beginning, the same end ; and that was repeated again and again.

“ This life is becoming unendurable,” said she.

“ So I think too,” answered I.

“ Indeed ! Do you think so too ? But I for my part am thoroughly tired of it. And we have borne these chains now for nearly a year ! ”

“ Ten months,” I answered.

“ To you it may seem ten years, to me it does not yet seem quite so long. But I suppose our happiness has already lasted too long ! O, how unhappy I am ! I can see it already ; you will come to hate me, if indeed you do not hate me already. But I, too, shall at last hate you.”

I longed to take her in my arms, and to carry her with her wrath through all the rooms, until at last she should laughingly exclaim, “ Now it is enough.” Best of all, I should have liked to kneel before her, to confess my conjugal sins, and beg for absolution, or to fall upon her neck and kiss it until it was so red with my embraces that fright would have brought her back to her senses ; in short, all the good thoughts that can only occur to the best sort of husband rose up in me. I give her a sidelong glance ; she sees my look, and shrugs her shoulders. I make a step towards her, she leaves the room, and I—do the same ; but in the opposite direction, down the stairs, deeply hurt, yet full of conscience-pricks before even I began to carry out my terrible plans of vengeance.

For a long time I continued walking round and round in a circle. I could not leave the spot, and involuntarily my looks always rested on the house in which dwelt my happiness.

Then all at once I remembered Concetta and Sulpicio, our good friends of former times ; and I thought that I had no one to undertake the office of peacemaker with Nina for me, and besides that I would never entrust such an office to any one, or ever permit it.

I said to myself, “ It is the first time ; but who knows whether it is the last time ? You must return to her, shorten her punishment as much as possible ; you must speak kindly to her, and say that we will not quarrel any more. But what if she, instead of listening kindly to me, should prove refractory ? O, what nonsense !

She will certainly answer my first kind word with a hearty kiss. Then we shall no longer talk or complain, but only laugh together."

Two or three times these reflections had brought me as far as the threshold of my house, and just as often I had gone away again. At length I ventured to cross the Rubicon, ran quickly through the doorway, sprang up the stairs, three or four steps at a time, and a moment after I stood before her, who had already come weeping to meet me on the landing.

She covered her face with her hands, and did not speak a word. I put my arm round her and drew her into the room; then I took her on my lap, gently forced her hands away from her eyes, laid my face next hers, and begged her forgiveness. But instead of forgiving me she broke out into fresh sobs, threw her arms round my neck, and laid her head on my shoulder. My heart was beating violently. Nina's behaviour seemed to me to tell of some misfortune. What could have happened during my absence? New caresses in kiss and word. When at length I ventured to address her with an anxious inquiry, she burst out afresh into more violent sobs.

"She is dead!"

"Who?"

"Concetta, poor Concetta!"

I was silent. To tell the truth, the matter did not affect me very deeply; the worthy lady was a good deal past seventy, and her place in heaven had long been reserved for her. Still I felt it my duty to pay some regard to Nina's sincere distress. When she had finished crying she said, in a voice of deep emotion:

"Now they are separated!"

"And who brought you the news?"

"A friend who visited me. Poor Concetta died quite suddenly the day before yesterday."

"And Sulpicio?"

"Is in despair. He does not speak a word, and seems quite stunned."

"I must go and see him."

"Yes, do, my friend; go at once."

I went. When I arrived—Alas, the poor old heart had not been able to endure the grief of desolation! In that same night, a few hours after they had carried out his life's companion, he lay down in his widowed bed in the certain conviction that he should not see the next morning.

The dead man's smiling face seemed to say to me, "Even death has not been able to separate us."

With my heart full of sadness, but of mild beneficent sadness, I

returned home. We were alone. I said not a word to Nina. She fell sadly round my neck and pressed me to her heart.

“ Carlo ! ”

“ Nina ! ”

She cast up her eyes, as though she wished to read my thoughts in mine ; then she whispered :

“ We too ! Is it not true ? ”

-MATILDE SERAO
1856-

AN INTERVENTION

I

GUIDO certainly looked perfectly happy ; indeed, any one would have thought that he had not a care in the world. He was on his way home from a political banquet, where he had been explaining in detail his programme to his electors. He had been complimented on all sides, and, added to this, the dinner itself had been excellent and the champagne all that could be desired. Guido felt quite easy in his own mind about the result of the election, and now this evening he was going to a ball, where he would enjoy a flirtation with the Baroness Stefania. He was just returning home now to have an hour's rest and a nap, like Napoleon on the eve of a battle. On entering the dining-room his faithful old servant, Giuseppe, followed him respectfully in, and stood for a minute evidently desiring to speak to his master.

"What is it, Giuseppe ? " asked Guido.

"If you will excuse me, sir, I wanted——"

"Be quick about it, my good fellow, for I have not much time."

"Do you not remember what day it is, sir ? "

"No—what do you mean ? "

"It is your birthday——"

"Ah ! so it is," said Guido, and his face clouded over.

"There always *used* to be flowers everywhere, sir——"

"There *used* to be—but that's over—there are none in these days," and Guido smiled bitterly.

"You'll please to excuse me, sir," said the old man, stepping forward and uncovering a huge bouquet on the table.

"Oh, Giuseppe—there's no need to apologise, my good fellow. Thank you very much ; this little surprise has given me great pleasure."

Guido could not help feeling melancholy all the same at the thought that on this day, when he was accustomed to being *fêted*, there was only his old servant now to remember it. It was only a

passing regret, for Guido was too much a man of the world not to be able to throw off all *appearance* of emotion.

"I am going to my room to get a little rest," he said to Giuseppe ; "you can wake me at eight."

"You'd better not, sir," said the servant, earnestly.

"And why not, pray ?"

"Because, sir, when Girolamo was here alone this morning a lady called, and when she found that you were out, she said : ' Tell your master, when he comes in, that I will call again at seven, and ask him to be sure and wait in for me, as I want to see him on particular business.' "

"And her name ?"

"She would not give it."

"H—m ! more and more mysterious ! Did Girolamo say what she was like ?"

"Yes, she was young, tall, dark, and very well dressed."

"Oh ! it's getting decidedly interesting and I feel curious. And you think, then, Giuseppe, for the sake of this unknown lady, I ought to forgo my nap ?"

"Well, it is just seven o'clock, sir. If she is anything like punctual, you wouldn't have time to lie down before she is here."

"Oh, well. I will make the sacrifice. Get my newspaper, Giuseppe, and I'll read until she arrives. Dark !—the Baroness Stefania is fair—nothing like a change," murmured Guido to himself when the old man had gone out of the room.

It certainly sounds very much as though the young politician were a veritable Don Juan, but in reality it was nothing of the kind. Guido had had a great disappointment in his life. He had loved one woman passionately and devotedly—but his happiness had been suddenly snatched away from him, and the love still smouldered in his heart, half smothered and stifled as it had been. For the last two years Guido had been striving to forget—and he had thrown himself headlong into all the gaieties and diversions of society life.

"If you please, sir !" exclaimed Giuseppe, re-entering the dining-room hastily.

"Has she arrived ?"

"She is in the drawing-room."

"Do you know her ?"

"No—no, sir," stammered the old servant.

Guido was soon in the drawing-room. He opened the door quietly and stood for a few seconds contemplating his visitor. She was standing near a table turning over the leaves of an album. Her back was turned towards the door, but Guido could see that she was tall and graceful. She wore a very handsome dark silk dress, and was decidedly elegant.

"Madam——," said Guido, advancing towards her.

She turned suddenly, and her host felt as though he had received an electric shock. He bowed, however, profoundly, in order to hide the surprise on his face. "I am not inconveniencing you by coming this evening?" she asked, after returning his bow, and then she sat down very deliberately.

"Certainly not, I am entirely at your service."

"If you say that merely out of politeness, so much the worse for you, as I should like to take it literally."

"Do so, by all means. I take upon myself all risk, and shall be glad to hear what you have to say," answered Guido, smiling.

The lady, whose name was Emma, stroked her muff, evidently hesitating as to how she was going to express what she had to say.

Guido was watching her—yes, she was just as beautiful as ever—just as fascinating as that first time he had seen her; it seemed to him even that her beauty was perhaps more complete, more wonderful than ever. The profile was more decided, she had a faint colour in her cheeks, and her eyes, which were always so intelligent, had now another expression in them, a more beautiful expression than ever. It was very evident that the woman before him had suffered—that she had had some great trouble.

"Have you ever taken part in a comedy?" she asked at length.

"Oh, yes! I am still acting in one that never comes to an end."

"My question was needless, I see. To-morrow, then, I want you to continue, that is all; but you will have an important rôle to take, and it will be difficult to succeed."

"All depends on the actors and the public."

"You will have me as a partner."

"I know what talent you have."

"For acting?"

"For declaiming. Is it a proverb we are to act?"

"Yes, but the moral of it is in the motive for which it is given—not in the comedy itself. Tell me, do you still write regularly to my father?"

"Yes; but for the last three weeks he has not answered my letters."

"I received a letter from him yesterday, in which he tells me that he is very well, and that he will arrive to-morrow in Milan by the train at twenty past ten."

Guido could not conceal his surprise now.

"To-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Your father—who never stirs from home!"

"He is on his way back to Naples after a journey that he was obliged to take, and is coming round this way to see——"

"His daughter," put in Guido.

"And his son, he says."

"So that——?"

"So that I think it is a very pleasant sort of position for us," said Emma, putting her small foot on a velvet stool by her chair.

"You think it pleasant?"

"It is scarcely worth while discussing mere words; it would be better to find a way out of the difficulty."

"I do not see any way out."

"And yet you are a politician and an intelligent man! Of what use has it been, then, for you to learn the art of clever subterfuges, to undertake transactions of the most delicate nature, and to have accustomed yourself to using phrases which are no doubt both sincere and diplomatic?"

"If you continue in that strain I shall have fewer and fewer ideas every minute."

"I have a plan."

"Yes, I knew you had."

"It is very evident that you are trying to be obliging."

"I wish you always thought so."

"Well, listen. I would not have my father, upon any account, know the truth."

"The wretched truth," interrupted Guido.

"It is no use putting adjectives in everywhere. My father would be nearly heartbroken if he knew, and I should feel such remorse. It seems to me that it is not right for the mistakes and faults of the children to be visited on the parents. Until now, as you have helped me in this, thanks to the distance and to his not knowing any one in Milan, he has been spared this grief. But now, to-morrow, all the pious lies and all our hypocrisy would be discovered, and Heaven knows what would be the result. It must be prevented, and I am counting on you to help me. He must see us together when he comes to-morrow, and we must not betray, either by word or look, the true situation. This is what we must do."

Emma had spoken earnestly and firmly, and Guido had listened attentively. He was silent for a moment when she stopped speaking, and she began again, impatiently:

"It is merely a comedy, as I told you at first. A play given for a charitable purpose. It ought not to cost you so much."

"Oh, I am quite ready and willing," said Guido; "but are you not afraid that something may go wrong and compromise everything?"

"In what way?"

"Well, there are the servants."

"Send your new valet out to-morrow for a day's holiday, and then

I will speak to Giuseppe."

"Very well. But supposing some friend should happen to drop in?"

"You must tell Giuseppe you are not at home to any one."

"I suppose we should go to the station to meet your father. What will everyone say when they see us together?"

"They won't see us. We can go in a close carriage and drive fast."

"Your father will be here all day: no matter how unsuspicious he may be, don't you think the house looks very much like a bachelor's dwelling now?"

"Oh! that can soon be altered. My work-table and other little things, and then my music, can be brought here this evening. That will all be our *mise en scène*, you know."

"But——"

"Oh! you have perhaps had some alterations made in the other rooms?"

"No! nothing has been altered," said Guido, speaking very seriously; "everything is—as you left it."

"By way of sentiment?"

"It was out of respect."

"A thousand thanks. Have you any other objections?"

"None whatever; the great thing is now whether we shall succeed in deceiving M. Giorgianni."

"By acting a sentimental couple? We must think of the past and try to remember all our nonsense during our honeymoon," said Emma sarcastically.

"Oh! I had completely forgotten all that," replied her husband promptly. They both glanced at each other questioningly, as though measuring strength like two duellists.

"It is perhaps selfish of me to ask you to give up your day like this to-morrow. Have you no engagements?"

"None; and if I had I should break them."

"Thanks, again. But this evening you are free, at any rate; I do not need any company."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I must stay and arrange the things, and send for my part of the stage scenery, so that it may look more as it used to. I do not want you, though, to feel you have to stay here and watch me—it would be too dull for you. Go out—anywhere—for until ten o'clock to-morrow you are quite free."

"I was going to a ball—but if you like I will stay in——"

"Why? Oh no! for we should have to keep up a conversation, and now that we have nothing more to say to each other——"

"Nothing—or else, perhaps—too much! Well, then; if you will

excuse me, I will go and dress."

Emma bowed, and Guido left the room, *looking* as though he had nothing in the world to trouble him. In reality, he felt by no means as calm as he appeared.

At the ball he was most absent-minded, and the Baroness Stefania did not know what to make of him. After two or three dances, he managed, during a quadrille, to slip away unobserved, and on returning home he found that a complete transformation scene had taken place. The large drawing-room, which had not been used for some time, was open, and candles were lighted everywhere. The wardrobes and cupboards, too, were all open, and there was a strong scent of violets. A copy of one of the newest songs was on the piano; the furniture had been moved about to give a less stiff appearance; flowers were in all the vases, and Emma herself in a pretty tea-gown was just standing on tip-toe to put a small statue upon a bracket.

Was it all a dream? Emma there! And these two long years of separation, had he forgotten them—and their terrible quarrel?

"Good-night!" said Guido, as he passed through the room.

"Good-night," she replied, without turning round.

II

And yet before their marriage they had been so foolishly in love with each other. Guido had followed Emma from Florence to Naples, and had passed whole nights under her window. Emma had written letters of eight pages to him every day, and had stayed out on her balcony till quite late in the evening. The young couple had been blissfully happy and devotedly in love with each other for three years. They had had their little differences, for Emma had been greatly indulged by her father, and she was quick-tempered and very jealous. Guido, like all well-balanced temperaments, was very calm always, and his cool manner and ironical or contemptuous smile when she was fuming had frequently had the effect of fuel added to a fire. Sometimes they had offended each other seriously, but the making-up the quarrel afterwards had always been all the more tender. One day, however, it happened that Guido happened to meet a girl whom he had formerly very much admired, and with whom he had in the old days fancied himself deeply in love. Somehow or other, Emma had become aware of this, and reproached him with never having told her. Guido, angry at being dictated to, and also at his wife's want of confidence, put on a careless, indifferent manner.

All Emma's deep love for her husband seemed to change suddenly into cold contempt and scorn. She was very proud, and she had been deeply wounded at the thought of having a rival in her husband's

affections, for with her quick imagination she had convinced herself that Guido still loved this other woman.

She sent for her husband, and very calmly, without her voice trembling in the least, she announced to him that she had decided it would be better for them to separate quietly, without any fuss or any scene.

Guido was stupefied ; at first he protested, and then tried to take it all as a joke, and wanted to explain matters to her ; but his wife answered so coldly and so proudly, that there was nothing left for him but to maintain a frigid silence. It seemed to him that it was beneath his dignity to plead his cause, and so he merely agreed to all her conditions and let her go, judging her to be both proud and heartless. Ever since then he had busied himself with politics, gone out a great deal into society, and putting on a careless, indifferent air, pretended to be sceptical, and quite happy in his second bachelorhood. When he was alone, however, and when he had the courage to face his own soul, he owned to himself that his whole life was ruined, and that he felt utterly desolate. He had happened to meet his wife since their separation several times. They had bowed to each other almost like strangers, and had passed on their respective ways.

Emma had withdrawn from society, so her husband was sure never to meet her at the balls and theatres, where he now spent the greater part of his spare time. They had, before separating, agreed on one point, and that was to continue writing to the old father as though nothing had happened.

Guido used to put in his letters : " Emma is well, but I suppose she has given you all the news about herself ; she sends her love," etc., and then Emma wrote in her letter : " Guido is very well, but very busy. He was not able to get off in order to stay with me at the sea."

And so M. Giorgianni's happiness had gone on hanging by this fragile silken thread. To meet and speak to each other thus, for the first time after that supremely cruel day of their separation, had been no easy matter for either of them.

Emma had had to put aside her pride before she could thus bring herself to enter her husband's house, ask him this favour, and put on that hypocritical mask of indifference and of sarcasm. " It is for my father's sake ! " she had kept repeating to herself in order to brace herself up to it.

Guido's cold politeness had given her strength. Their conversation had been, on the whole, courteous and satisfactory. There had been no allusion to past, present, or future, with the exception of just one or two stinging remarks ; but there had been no scene, no reproaches. They had both behaved like wise practical indivi-

duals. Yes, but what about the next day? The next day would probably be the same; a little courage, and very much hypocrisy, no blunders, and a whole series of white lies, as they brought the old man home from the station. Then afterwards, when it was all over, why, they would bow again most formally to each other, and would go on their way as though nothing had happened. Of any attempt at a reconciliation there was not the least idea. Guido would never make the first advance, and Emma would never forgive. Such were the thoughts of both husband and wife, and then they each concluded with the idea that, after all, they were quite satisfied and perfectly resigned to their present arrangement.

III

Dinner was just over, and Signor Giorgianni was smiling, for he felt so happy—he had had such a hearty reception, and everything seemed so very satisfactory.

The two actors managed to get up a smile also—but the fact was, all that had appeared so easy to them the night before had proved very difficult when it came to the point. For instance, when Emma's father had arrived, he had put his arms round both of them as he kissed his daughter. Then they had been obliged to call each other by their old familiar pet names, and to show those little attentions to each other which come quite naturally to a husband and wife who adore each other, as they were supposed to; and all the time, a word or an intonation of the voice which recalled the past would make Guido turn pale with emotion and would bring the colour into Emma's cheeks, and make them both feel awkward for a moment. Prepared as they had been for the ordeal, and try as they did to forget themselves and their own personalities, the reality would keep coming to their minds, and they could not stifle entirely the old interest in each other. Added to all this was the fear lest some careless, thoughtless remark might escape them, and thus cancel all the efforts they had made; and then more vague and undefined was an idea which was growing more and more persistent, that somehow, in some strange way, this comedy would lead to some unforeseen change, that henceforth a new era would begin for them.

Whilst M. Giorgianni was going upstairs in front of them, Emma glanced despairingly at her husband, and he knew she was thinking, "How shall we go on with this comedy until the end of the day?"

He replied by another glance which meant: "We must do our best, and have faith for the rest."

The worst was yet to come, for no sooner had M. Giorgianni taken

an arm-chair comfortably in the drawing-room than he began asking all kinds of embarrassing questions, and making remarks which were not calculated to put the young husband and wife at their ease, considering the circumstances.

"Yes," he said, putting down his coffee-cup, "I am thoroughly enjoying this day with you, my children. You see, Emma, *mia*, letters are all very well in their way, but I prefer a visit, even though it be a short one. Do you know, my child, you look very well, and prettier than ever, I declare—isn't she, Guido?"

"Yes, that is what I am always telling her," replied the son-in-law, smiling.

"Yes; and what you tell me, too, in your letters. Yes, Emma, that is a fact; Guido writes of nothing else but his wife in his letters. It's my belief you have quite bewitched him. What a model husband!"

"Yes, indeed, he is," said Emma, quietly.

There was silence for a moment after this remark. Guido's head was bent, he appeared to be counting the flowers on the carpet.

"Your Aunt Elizabeth sends all kinds of messages to you both—and Rosalia, your cousin, too. Poor girl, she's had a lot of trouble!"

"Why, she married her Piero!" exclaimed Emma, a shade of sarcasm in her tone.

"Yes, yes, she married him, and they were very fond of each other. But, I don't know, they did not hit it off very well; there were scenes and tears, and Rosalia went back home."

"Oh, well, she did quite right."

"Quite wrong, you mean. A wife ought never to leave her husband. Well, it's all right now, thanks to my eloquence. I persuaded her to forgive all she had against her husband."

"You, papa?"

"Yes, and I glory in my intervention. It was your mother's creed, my child; she was so merciful and so tolerant—ah! she was a good woman! She always used to say: 'Those who love the most pardon the most.'"

Every one was silent again, and then M. Giorgianni suddenly said:

"Come, my children, I want to go all through the house and see everything. There seems to me to be plenty of silk and velvet everywhere, but I have only glanced round. I want to see everything now."

"Come along," said Guido; "we will begin with the large drawing-room."

"It's magnificent, this room," said M. Giorgianni, on entering.

"Just the thing for a large reception. Do you have many parties?"

"Well, we used to give more than we do just now."

"Yes, yes, I understand; your business affairs and your political

engagements must take up your time a great deal ; but it's a lovely room. Ah ! and this is the boudoir ? Exquisite taste, to be sure. Did you choose the furniture, Emma ? ”

“ No, it was Guido who chose it. ”

“ Well, my compliments, then, ” said the father, turning to his son-in-law. “ I suppose you are always to be found here, Emma ? Are you not afraid of every one coming to make love to her, Guido ? ”

“ I ! I know my wife too well for that ! ”

“ And you, Emma, are you ever jealous ? ”

“ I know my husband too well, papa ! ”

Both these answers had been given so spontaneously that M. Giorgianni was quite satisfied.

“ This bedroom is lovely, the colours harmonize so well. ” He turned round and looked about as though he missed something.

“ Emma ! ” he said.

“ Yes, papa, what is it ? ”

“ Where is your mother's portrait—I do not see it anywhere ? ”

She did not know what to reply, and her husband interposed.

“ We have been away from home, and we have not all our luggage here yet. ”

“ That portrait, though, should not have been left behind. It's all the same, though : Emma would never forget her mother. Ah ! Guido, *mia*, you ought to have known her. When she was dying she made me promise that I would sacrifice everything for our child's happiness, so you see she helped you in your marriage. When Emma came and said to me, ‘ Papa, I shall never be happy if I do not marry Guido ’—well, I thought of my poor dead wife, and that decided me. It was as though you were intended for each other, and you had been in love then for about a year. Emma was getting pale and wretched looking, and as for you, Guido, you were like a madman. Ah ! young lovers ! how foolish they are. Do you remember that ball at the English Consul's, Emma, where we went with Guido ? ”

“ Yes, I remember, ” said Emma, mechanically.

“ When every one saw you that evening there was no need to tell the news, it was very evident that you were engaged, and every one began congratulating me. Oh ! but you know you were really too much in love. ”

“ Yes, too much ! ” assented Guido.

“ Oh ! I mean it, though. Well, well, let us hope it will always continue, eh ! Emma ? ”

“ Yes, let us hope so. ”

“ What's this room ? Why, it's locked ! ”

It was the room Guido now used, and which Emma had not

entered. They had not counted on the old man wanting to see every room.

Emma came to the rescue, for it was Guido's turn not to know what to answer.

"It is the spare room, papa."

"Ah! the one you would have put me in if I could have stayed? Yes, I must go to-night; it's a pity!"

"Yes, indeed it is," said Guido.

"Well, never mind, I'll look at my room by way of consoling myself——"

"But, papa——" began Emma.

"I understand. It is not in order; oh! That does not matter, child—not at all."

Guido turned the key, and opened the door, courageously, for he saw there was nothing else to be done.

"Ah! A very nice room, and quite in order, my child. Ah! and there's your portrait. I'm sure it was Guido who put that there for me. Thank you, my dear fellow; it was very thoughtful, but I really cannot stay this time, although I should like to very much."

They went back into the drawing-room and sat down. Both husband and wife were very absent-minded, and certainly if Signor Giorgianni had been endowed with much perspicacity, he would have discovered that something was wrong. Fortunately, the excellent old man was not good at guessing enigmas.

"What a pity for you to leave such a beautiful house!"

"Why, papa?"

"Well, if Guido should be elected member, why, you will have to live in Rome six months of the year, and I suppose he won't leave you alone in Milan. You will have to have two houses—it will be a nuisance for you—but I shan't be sorry. If you come to Rome, I shall be able to see you at least once a month—from Naples to Rome, it is quite a short, easy journey; whilst from Naples to Milan—no, that is too far, too far! We shall be sure to see each other often then."

IV

When our two actors, after conducting Signor Giorgianni to the station, got into the carriage to drive home, they both involuntarily gave a sigh of relief.

The comedy was over, and they were going back again to their ordinary life. Emma looked out of the window at the rain, and Guido did not stir: they were strangers again to each other now. By accident Guido touched his wife's arm.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"It is granted," she replied carelessly.

Strangers, indeed! And yet they were now both of them going over in their mind the events of the day, and recalling to themselves the sensations they had felt.

"Would you prefer driving straight to your house?" asked Guido, just before they reached the place where their roads separated.

"No, I must go and help my maid to collect all the little things I put about in your rooms. I will go home as soon as we have finished."

"Very well."

When they arrived, Emma went straight upstairs and through the large drawing-room to her boudoir.

Guido threw himself on a divan in the drawing-room and pretended to be reading a newspaper. In reality, he was listening to her footsteps as she moved slowly about in the other room. He saw her pass the open door once or twice.

"Are you not tired?" he called out at last. "Can I help you?"

"No, thank you, I have almost finished."

Presently she came into the drawing-room and sat down, very wearily. The excitement of the day had completely exhausted her. She looked round the room as though she missed something.

"It's raining still, is it not?" she asked Guido, for he had put his paper down.

"Yes, it's still going on."

"The carriage is not there yet?"

"I really don't know, but I'll go and see."

"No, it does not matter; it was to be round in ten minutes from now."

"Shall I see you home?"

"No, it isn't worth while, thank you."

Did these ten minutes appear to them like a century or like an instant? Perhaps in a way like both. When the footman announced that the carriage was at the door, Emma rose deliberately, and walking across to the large mirror, put on her hat. It took her some time to fasten it with the pins, for her fingers were trembling slightly.

She then put her gloves on very slowly, and gave a few finishing touches to herself at the glass. When she was quite ready, she turned towards Guido to say good-bye.

He had risen from his seat and his face was deadly pale.

"Good-bye," said Emma.

Guido did not reply. She turned away and walked across the drawing-room proudly, without wavering an instant, her step firm,

but she knew that her husband was following her.

When she reached the door she lifted her hand to raise the velvet curtain, but Guido was more prompt, and her hand touched his as he held the curtain down.

"You have forgotten to tell me that you have forgiven me, Emma!" he said, very quietly, in a voice in which grief and passion were each struggling for the mastery.

She turned towards him abruptly and hid her face on his shoulder, for the love had sprung up again between them with a stronger force than ever.

"You will never go away any more, darling, never?"

"No, Guido, we will fetch my mother's picture back here."

GRAZIA DELEDDA.

1872—

TWO MEN AND A WOMAN

AMONG the prisoners who arrived at the Penitentiary on the 23rd of March, as the setting sun was flooding with crimson its cold, grim walls, was a young man of distinguished appearance; he was dressed in grey, and the folds of his large, soft grey hat, adorned with a knot of grey ribbon, quite hid his pale, thin face, with its aquiline nose and carefully-kept pointed beard. During the journey he had not spoken once, but sat with bent head and knitted brows, his eyes intently fastened upon his thin, nervous hands with their long, polished nails, enclosed in the shining bands of the steel handcuffs. On reaching the Penitentiary he had for an instant raised his head and fixed his shining, burning eyes upon the countenance of the Direttore, who on his side returned the gaze coldly and at length. By a queer coincidence, the prisoner and the Direttore had the same name—Cassio Longino¹ And they both knew it; and the prisoner, who in his distant country across the sea where “Cassio” means “a white petticoat,” had often been the subject of many a caricature, experienced now a sort of bitter satisfaction, on seeing himself on that account sought by the cold, scornful glance of the Signore Direttore. With the first glance, the two men hated each other. The Direttore was approaching middle life, was small and stooped a little. His feet and hands were small, and the latter were always plunged in the pockets of his long, black overcoat. His clean-shaven face bore the marks of physical suffering, which was accentuated in deep lines about the pale, thin lips; his eyes were small and green, and full of an almost cruel indifference; his hair was blond and short, and his ears large and prominent. For all these reasons, but chiefly because he was the commandant of the prison, he was exceedingly displeasing to No. 245; and No. 245 was displeasing to the commandant on account of his haughty manner, the fiery look with which he observed him, and especially on account of his vigorous, superb youth.

While the prisoners were being consigned to their quarters, the Direttore did not open his mouth, and for several days Cassio, shut

up in a private cell, did not again see him. His cell faced the east, and through the tiny aperture pierced in the great stone rampart he could see the distant Apennines, still covered with snow, and the Tuscan landscape, over which the early spring was scattering a vivid green sward, and the pale, tender colouring of bursting twig and blossom. In the Penitentiary garden, which was cultivated by prisoners clad in white linen suits and red caps, Cassio, who by especial permission of the Government retained his gentleman's clothes, watched the peach trees burst into a glory of intensest pink, and the apple trees toss their delicate bloom in rich masses through the balmy fragrant air.

A prey to keen anguish and despair, he never wandered far from his cell. The long, silent evenings overwhelmed him with despair ; often he did not sleep at night, but tossed feverishly upon his hard straw pallet. When, in the morning, the guard, a great, tall fellow, whose red head brushed against the ceiling of the cell, would come in to make up the bed, Cassio was always dressed and standing before his tiny, barred window.

Outside the swallows were wheeling and fluttering about, their wings and breasts flashing in the sunshine. The prisoner did not deign to speak a word to the guard, nor did he take the slightest notice of the continual complaints, whistles, or gestures of his neighbour on the right ; but when the exercise hour arrived and he was allowed to walk in the courtyard, he paced in haughty indifference, without even a glance at his companions, up and down the sad, dew-covered pavement.

The rumour spread through the prison that he was a very rich lord from Sardinia, a relation of the Direttore, and since the Direttore was feared and hated (though none of the prisoners knew the reason of this hate and fear, for the poor man had never done them any evil, except with his look of icy indifference), No. 245, within a week after his arrival, was hated, and strange to say, was feared.

Having requested permission to write, on the first of April, he was sent for into the office ; through the barred window there penetrated a ray of pale sunshine, in whose light danced the shadows of a distant tree-top. The Direttore, bent more than usual, was working at a grey table ; he neither moved nor spoke for a long time, during which Cassio, standing upright and stiff, his eyes fixed on the branches trembling in the sunshine, grew hot with humiliation.

Ah ! in the presence of the others, of that crowd of criminals, and the vile guards, he could at least give himself the satisfaction of taking refuge in a certain, scornful dignity ; he was stronger than those who bound him, greater than those whom he would not even

deign to call companions in misfortune, but in the presence of this little man, so ill and full of disdain, he must bow, must reply, must humiliate himself.

"You," said the Direttore brusquely, turning around, but not rising, "are condemned to three years of simple detention for forgery; and you may write only once a month."

His voice was rather weary, but the tone was pure Tuscan.

"I know it," replied Cassio, "but I have not asked to be allowed to write to my own home, but on my own account, in my own cell."

"It is not possible. Why do you not ask to be placed in the office of the clerks?"

"Is there chance of being allowed to do so?"

"Yes, there is every chance."

That very day Cassio proffered his request, and on the next was placed in the office, where a great quantity of work was badly executed by three other prisoners. The room, which was next to that of the Direttore, was even more desolate and gloomy, and the three clerks, the first, fat and bald, with small, bleared eyes; the second, fair, pale, and with a transparent look, and the third a tall muscular young man, with black curly hair, and the face of a Roman emperor, made a bad impression on the new arrival.

They appeared resigned to, and even contented with, their melancholy fate. Cassio, on the other hand, experienced a profound disgust, which was but accentuated by the stupid resignation of his companions in misfortune—a very anguish of impotent desperation, and regretted his request. Better to have remained alone in his cell, with his hands clasping the bars of the little window, and before him the distant Apennines, that brought to him memories of his own native mountains, resounding with the neighing of his black charger, dashing in pursuit of the straying sheep—alone with his sentence and his sorrow!

He of the curly head, bolder than the other two, who contented themselves with casting stealthy glances at him, sought promptly, though respectfully, to make his acquaintance. (They knew that he had the same name as the Direttore, and so it was told among the other prisoners.)

"Are you a Sardinian?"

"Yes," replied he coldly.

"Since Fate has sent you to this place, allow me——"

"A beautiful Fate!" interrupted Cassio bitterly, and cut off sharply the compliment the unfortunate man was about to present to the presumed great Sardinian signore. But he said nothing more himself, nor asked anything of the others.

Three days later, there arrived for him from Sardinia a letter

bearing an air of indefinable elegance. The handwriting was large and firm, while a delicious, almost imperceptible fragrance escaped from the sheets.

The Direttore opened it, and read it with a certain hesitation and half feeling that he had been expecting it.

After all, he was a man who was still young ; he had suffered much and loved much, and if his own sufferings had produced that profound indifference which passed from cruelty among the unhappiness it was his fate to control, there still remained in his heart something of sympathy and compassion. Had No. 245 been a poor devil, like almost all the other prisoners, instead of a most interesting personality, the Direttore, after the first day, would never have given him another thought. But this handsome young stranger, with his haughty, distinguished air, who had arrived surrounded by a romantic mystery, had attracted the attention of every one, as well as his own.

The queer stories current in the gloomy cells and dark corridors had also reached his ears.

The thought that there might be something of truth in them had even begun to pierce his customary indifference with a faint interest, which was augmented as he perused the letter.

Not that it contained anything of especial interest. It was written by a half-sister of Cassio.

An intense affection manifested itself through all the four sheets, a certain nameless sweetness, and exquisite suggestion of comfort and resignation.

"Have courage, Cassio, do not despair nor suffer too much ; remember that we two are alone in the world, alone to love and believe in one another. The time will pass, and when God reunites us I will know how to recompense thee for the immense sacrifice thou hast made for me. Do not feel humiliated nor cast down ; the good know that thy fault was an act of heroism——"

"Indeed," thought the Direttore, "prisoners are always innocent, generally are victims, but that they should be heroes !"

This letter, so different from the vulgar epistles that were accustomed to come to the Penitentiary, so good, delicate, and loving, gave him food for reflection.

A sort of morbid curiosity took possession of him, against which he struggled in vain, to find out, to know everything. So that in spite of himself, though not contrary to the regulations of the establishment, which he scrupulously observed, he sent for No. 245, and on his arrival he opened the conversation by explaining some difficult work to be done in the office, and then, fixing a look of close scrutiny upon him, said :

"Here is a letter for you."

Cassio proffered never a word, but raised his head, and his face turned red to the tips of his ears.

And for the second time a wonderful thing happened. The Direttore of the Penitentiary envied his prisoner. For to the prisoner in his profound wretchedness had come a voice of comfort and affection, illuminating his dark horizon with a glory that was mirrored on his countenance, and to him, free and powerful, alone and lost in the infinite sadness of deep suffering, there never came one word of tenderness, one ray of light.

In spite of his emotion, Cassio perceived something abnormal was passing in the mind of the Direttore, and, astute Sardinian that he was, he took advantage to ask eagerly if he might not have the letter at once and read it there in the office.

Better there, under the badly concealed indifference of the little green eyes, than in the repulsive surroundings of his workroom, subject to the vulgar curiosity of the three clerks.

From that day he became more sociable, more resigned, and the Signore Direttore showed him a certain deference which did not escape the eyes of the others, and but confirmed the report of an assumed relationship.

But still he did not receive permission to write until he had been there a month, though on the very day he was given two sheets. And his letter was not less affectionate than had been his sister's, though less sweet and delicate; in every line was displayed the agony of helplessness:

"I have been here but a month, though it seems thirty years. I am beginning to be more resigned. They have put me in the clerk's office, with three terrible strangers [this the Direttore erased], the work is hard, but it helps to pass the time. At first I could not accustom myself to it, now I am less desperate. The Signore Direttore is very kind to me. Yes, I know the time will pass somehow or other, but still I feel as if my sentence would be eternal; that the 987 days yet remaining are as boundless as the waves; but most of all do I suffer when I think of thee; and yet the thought brings me much comfort. Thou art so good. Please do not forget me and get married while I am away! But I am ashamed, my dear Paola, such a thing I well know is impossible. How could a good sister forget her unhappy brother? But all the same, when I am tossing sleeplessly on my narrow bed, the thought fills me with terror. Who could believe such a thing possible?"

"Though I am now resigned to all, I did once believe in the justice of men. But what have they done to me? Write very soon and do not forget me. If that were to happen I would soon find a termination to my sufferings."

Not a word nor thought for any one else, only for her! The

answer arrived by return mail, together with clothes, books, and money.

The Signore Direttore felt anew the strange fascination of envy and longing, as he read the delightful tender letter of Paola. She had not a word of reproach for the lack of confidence the unhappy man had shown in her, but said how grieved she was that he should be so sad, and assured him she would never marry until his return. She had, too, a good word for the Signore Direttore. "Love and respect him; he can do much for thee; can be like a father to thee" ["a brother, young lady," thought the Direttore]. "I pray for thee and for him."

"Thanks," he murmured rather bitterly.

In the third letter, Cassio having asked what she was doing and how she passed the days:

"The days pass sadly in thy absence. I look after my affairs as well as I can, and often go into the country with my foster-parents. Poor things, they are a great comfort to me! We go on horseback, and these trips are my only diversion. In the house nothing new has happened. I am embroidering the tapestry I began at school, when my dreams were so different from the present reality. I am working into it certain Sardinian embroideries ferreted out by the foster-mother.

"I never see any one, but am always thinking of thee and counting the days."

"Why in the world do not these people, who seem rich and cultivated, think of asking for a pardon?" the Direttore asked himself, and, rising, he went into the garden—where the Tuscan spring was rioting amid a very glory of roses, crimson, white and yellow; while gleaming among the deep green of the shrubbery, like brilliant butterflies, moved about the little red caps of the prisoner gardeners—and fell into a strangely sweet strain of thought of which the tender strong sister of No. 245 was the subject. In fancy he saw her, tall and dark, like her brother, with the pallor and distinguished appearance so marked in the prisoner; or bending patiently over her embroidery; or else trotting on her little Sardinian horse, her eyes half closed as she faced the ardent beams of the midday sun. Then, lost in wonder, he took himself to task for such boyish romance, till he worked himself into quite a frenzy of anger at his foolishness, which left him exhausted and more indifferent even than was his wont.

And so the months rolled by, bringing three or four more letters from Paola. In the last she promised to send her picture, if Cassio was quite sure he would be allowed to receive it.

"It is allowed," wrote the Direttore at the bottom of the page before sending it to the prisoner.

For one, two, three weeks, in that great pile, under the overarching blue sky and ardent sunshine that turned it into a very furnace, two souls were awaiting with passionate eagerness, though under different aspects, that picture of a woman.

The waiting of Cassio was sweet and full of peace, amid the passive resignation that habit and hope had begun to plant in his heart. The pleasure of anticipation brought him almost a sentiment of happiness ; he would rise up early in the morning with the thought that perhaps to-day he would receive it, and as he waited for the guard who came to conduct him to the office, he would turn to his little window and reach out his hands as if striving to gather in some of the freshness of the morning ; and he was always thinking of the picture.

Outside the swallows were flitting and wheeling as they sang, their wings and tails gleaming in the sunshine ; the yellow corn surrounded with its golden glory the shining green of the distant vineyards, while farther away the watching Apennines shone in the luminous morning air. The prisoner called to mind the crimson dawns of his native mountains, brilliant with flowering yellow broom, then his thoughts turned to the expected picture, till he felt a vague feeling that was almost happiness.

The Direttore quitted his bed with a face even paler than was its wont, and he, too, thought of the picture ; but his waiting was made up of a strange mingling of restlessness, bitterness, and anger against himself, because he could not overcome his foolish curiosity, his foolish sentimentalism, the foolish interest " these people " awakened in him.

He went into the garden, and then into his bureau, and did his duty, performing all his tiresome work, and with cold eyes, and hands in his pockets, inspected those men clad in their prison garb of shame, but all the time he was waiting for the picture. In the bottom of his heart, under his anger and cruel indifference, there glimmered a spark of joy, from which a tiny ray sprang into his eyes and stayed there. And this spark, this hidden ray of light, burst into brilliant flame on the arrival of the picture, so instinct with life and loveliness and charm. She was not in the least as his fancy had pictured her ; for hers was a blonde and delicate loveliness. The beautiful dark eyes, and the delicately curved lips and dimpled chin were suffused with an infinite sweetness. It was the same ineffable sweetness as filled her letters, a fragrance exhaled from every word, and this mysterious and suggestive fascination it was which had conquered the soul of this silent man, who was thought cruel and was feared and hated only because he was a poor dreamer.

The letter accompanying the photograph was, as usual, full of sweetness and charm.

"I was thinking of thee and smiling when the picture was taken; may it bring thee a little joy and comfort in hoping for better days. Read in my eyes all that I would fain say to thee."

Just here, the Direttore, too, looked into the eyes of the picture, then finished reading the letter, only to return to gaze on the picture, turning it so that the full light should fall upon it, until the face seemed to assume a sort of reality, the lovely eyes to shine, the lips to smile.

"Oh, Dio! What a fool I am!" said Signore Longino to himself; but in his heart he was thinking: "How would this exquisite creature write to her lover, if she writes thus to her brother!" And then he fell to thinking sadly, that he was small, ugly, almost old, hated and feared by all those unfortunates whom his cold eyes dominated.

Once more he read the letter and gazed at the glowing picture, and—and that day neither the one nor the other was given to the prisoner.

That night the Signore Direttore had a queer dream; he thought a mutiny had broken out among the prisoners and they yelled and shook their chains and rushed upon him. He held Paola's picture in his hands and could neither move nor defend himself, for then the picture would fall to the ground and No. 245 would know that he had stolen it. But just as he was about to be killed by the prisoners, Cassio threw himself between, crying: "Leave him alone, for he is to marry my sister, and then he will become good because she is so good."

He waked up bathed in perspiration, and passed the rest of the night sleeplessly tossing about his bed.

Cassio, in the meanwhile, was waiting patiently, though, as the days passed, a vague anxiety disposed his new-found repose. A week went by and still no picture came, and he had waited so long! so long! What could be happening over yonder, beyond the sunlit sea among the purple solitudes of the fragrant thyme-scented mountains? Paola must be ill—or had she forgotten him? Cassio fell back into the agonised despair of his first days. He asked, but was refused, permission to telegraph. With difficulty he got permission to write two days sooner than his allotted month.

His letter was so sad and full of despair that the Direttore felt more than ever ashamed of his deed; for two weeks he had lived in torment, and while he seemed more cruel and hard than ever, his little green eyes fell sadly upon the prisoners, for at last he understood how, against his will, a man might be led into crime. As he

read the sad letter of No. 245, he murmured again : " But why do not they ask for pardon ? " And he became aware that with the new-found pity awakened for No. 245 mingled a certain egotism of hope, that then he could speak frankly to the prisoner—one no longer—and say : " Signore, I may be a fool, but all the same I have fallen desperately in love with your sister, whom I have never seen. Will you give her to me for my wife ? "

Paola telegraphed at once that she had sent another photograph by registered mail. In the eagerness for the peace of her poor prisoner, she pretended she had not sent a picture, and had been unable to write on account of a lot of reasons, which she detailed at length, principally she had been unable to be photographed before.

" How good she is ! " thought the Direttore in admiration, and he felt inclined to write and tell her everything.

But of course he did not do so. " She will think I am mad, and will fear for her brother. "

And so the summer passed and autumn approached ; prisoners came and went. In the office the three clerks were not only resigned, but even happy, but showed an ill-concealed dislike for the haughty Sardinian, who, to an extent, was himself resigned. Only amid the sweetness of the autumn, when the dawn flooded the pure sky with crimson and gold or the setting sun threw his red beams on the sad walls, he was tortured with longing for freedom and home ; and he fretted like a horse taken from his free pastures and shut up in confinement ; but he was learning to control these rebellions and to immerse himself to the lips in hope and dreams of the future, till the present seemed scarcely a reality. But when winter came and the Apennines were black with storm clouds, and the angry rain pelted incessantly the grim fortress, Cassio felt his nerves snap like cords stretched too far. During the day the three heads of the clerks, pinched with cold, the blear blue eyes, the transparent profile, the head like the Roman emperor, appeared to him as in some tortured vision, awakening within him a brutal desire to seize some object and crush them to pieces. This desire increased from day to day, and was at times so intense that Cassio experienced the strange sensation of having realised it. Once in his cell he would come to himself and understand that he hated the three unfortunate clerks because they represented during those terrible winter days all the human power that was torturing him, against which his inmost soul revolted. His nights were almost sleepless. Outside the wind was roaring with a suggestion of distant torrents. Amid the darkness and roar of elements Cassio lost all perception of time, and as he tossed on his narrow bed, blessed visions came at last to his storm-tossed heart. The sighing of the wind in his distant well-loved

mountains ; the prints of the wild boar among the green ferns ; the noisy stream bounding from rock to rock ; the partridges flitting among the flowering oleanders ; the joyful neighing of his black horse, and, above all else, the smile of Paola.

But with the grey dawn the sweetness of dreams was turned into bitter reality, and no one knows what might have happened to the three clerks had he not been one day providently summoned to the Direttore's office.

The Signore Direttore deigned to ask a favour. He had been sent a little fragrant plant with a few slender, dry branches ; it had come from Sardinia, and he wanted to know if the prisoner could tell him anything about it.

Cassio took the slender branches in his long, delicate hands, and inhaled its fragrance with closed eyes. The perfume brought him a vision of the green mountains of Gennargentu. An intense homesickness thrilled him.

" It is the tirtillo."

" The tirtillo. I thought so. The precious secret of the Sardinian shepherds that gives its especial aroma to the Sardinian cheese."

Cassio bowed in assent.

" The famous tirtillo," continued the Direttore, " the new cure for epizootic."

" In Sardinia it has been used for centuries," replied Cassio humbly. " Many things that on the continent pass for discoveries are well known on the island."

The Direttore did not reply, but turned his back and resumed his writing, and apparently all was over, when, suddenly turning around, he addressed Cassio without looking at him.

" Has a pardon been asked for you ? "

" Yes ; after the sentence in the Court of Cassation I appealed in the Giudiziarie of Cagliari."

" To whom did you appeal ? "

" To the Ministry."

" That was unfortunate. The Ministry when appealed to never decides. Often the prisoner has finished his term before they arrive at any conclusion."

Cassio looked very grave.

" It would be better to send your request to the Queen ; it would sooner be obtained."

" Pardon me," returned Cassio, bowing his head, " but is there a chance that it would be obtained ? "

" If the request should be made by your sister, it would be granted," answered the other brusquely, and again he turned his back so that he should not see the prisoner's emotion, and the latter

should not see the Direttore's confusion.

This time the conversation was really over, and Cassio was reconducted to his office. But he was really another man; the presence of his three unhappy companions aroused his compassion, but no longer his hatred. Around his thin fingers still lingered the fragrance of the tirtillo, and, raising them to his mouth, he inhaled the fresh sweetness of his distant meadows.

And probably for the first time, the Direttore was sincerely loved by one of his prisoners.

Cassio wrote to Paola begging her to ask the Queen for a pardon.

"You can make the request for yourself, without having recourse to the formal process of the law. Explain things as they are. I hope, and bless him who has counselled it."

And so the winter passed. In the limpid dawn of a February day, Cassio was standing before his grated window; his face was pale and bloodless, but his eyes were shining with hope. From the Apennines, which raised their lofty, white crests into the crystal azure of the sky, there came a delicious odour of snow; long strips of vivid green were scattered over the valley, and already in the garden the apricot trees were displaying their rosy blossoms.

Cassio felt his blood dance through his veins with the mysterious expectation of coming happiness; all the glories of the opening spring seemed reflected in his soul.

Another man, free, in his cold and melancholy rooms, felt the same tumultuous, though sweet sensation; his green eyes reflected the tender splendour of the budding season, his heart enclosed a precious shrine.

There came a day when the inquiry of the Ministry into the conduct of the prisoner, Cassio Longino de Isidoro, reached him. The Direttore's reply was of the best. He did not know why No. 245 had been guilty of forgery, but he believed him to be an honest young man, of fine morals and excellent education. By the same mail he also sent to an intimate in the Bureau a letter that, coming from such a person as Signore Longino, could not fail of effect.

Whether it was instrumental in bringing about the result or not, the decree of pardon and order for freedom arrived very soon after — when Cassio had been there just a year.

Once more he was summoned to the Direttore's office. Outside, the air was balmy and fragrant, and the sky of deepest blue. Inside, the shadows of distant branches trembled in the sunshine that poured in through the barred window. The Direttore was seated at his table, but this time he rose as Cassio entered. The youth

noticed it, but did not dare to give words to the wild hope that sprang up within him, but he felt his heart beat with a violence that well-nigh choked him.

"The decree has arrived," said the Direttore, and he was holding something in his hand.

"The decree?"

"The decree of pardon."

"For whom?" asked Cassio eagerly.

The Direttore began to lose patience.

"For whom but for you?" And he rejoiced in the deep emotion shown by the young man. So much the better; if the thing was so great as to seem impossible, so much the greater would be his gratitude. But then he thought sadly: Suppose his efforts should result in failure! If in the excess of his gratitude Cassio should give him false hopes!

"For me! for me!" stammered the poor youth. "For me! For how long?"

"For all the rest of your sentence. You are free—that is, not at once, but after a few formalities, in a week at most."

Gradually Cassio pulled himself together. At first he had gazed at the Direttore without seeing him. Now he began to look at him. He observed his pale face was flushed, that the air of physical suffering had disappeared, that the small, green eyes were shining.

He, on the other hand, was trembling violently, his face was ashy, his hands cold, and a mist floated before his eyes.

"The man is fine, when he is rejoicing in the happiness of another. How I have misjudged him," he thought. Then he asked himself. "But why did he do it?"

He was to know very soon.

The Direttore begged him to be seated; he showed him the decree, and profited by the moment in which Cassio was looking at the King's signature to begin:

"Now, I have something else to tell you. Listen and do not judge hastily. I have long been awaiting this moment, and the thing seemed easy, but now I see I need great courage and you great indulgence if we are to understand each other."

He smiled sadly, and the old expression of suffering returned once more.

Cassio looked at him stupidly, still confused with the weight of his happiness, but beginning to gain his self-control. The other understood that his opportunity was slipping away and hastened to speak, though, in spite of every effort, his voice trembled.

"I scarcely know how to express myself so that you may understand everything; but I have confidence in your intelligence."

Listen. I have done everything in my power to obtain that piece of paper there"—and he pointed to the decree, and Cassio, following his gesture, sat gazing at the sheet—"and, above all, I did so because I felt you deserved it." ("Does he know my story?" Cassio asked himself, feeling that his deserts in prison had been very few.) "I do not ask for gratitude, indeed I will be thankful if you will not allow that sentiment to influence you at all. I wish to speak to you as one gentleman to another." ("Heavens! does he think me a grand Signore and wish to ask me for money?" thought Cassio. "I am not ungrateful, but what *can* he want of me?") "Now you are free and are at liberty to act as seems good to you."

"Speak," returned the other, with a sad impatience, "whatever lies in my power——"

"I do not know if it lies in your power."

"Speak! Speak!"

"Listen, but do not ill-judge me, nor think me insane. While reading your sister's letters, I have learned to appreciate so good and noble a soul, and——" ("Oh, Dio mio! he has fallen in love with her!" cried Cassio to himself, and the world grew suddenly dark.) "I have learned to love her. Do not laugh at me. I am still young!"

But Cassio felt small inclination to laugh.

"Have you written to her?" he asked brusquely.

"No, certainly not. Pray do not be offended. I have not allowed myself so great a privilege. Only to you——"

"But it is impossible, not to be thought of—impossible!" interrupted Cassio, striking as he spoke the paper which was lying on his knees, till it rustled.

"It seems impossible, but it is true; and though it may be strange, it is not the first time it has happened. My demand is serious, Signore Longino. Can your sister accept it?"

"What demand?"

The other thought a moment. "This young man is labouring under too much excitement; I was wrong to speak to him so suddenly. He is not in a state to hear it."

"My proposal of marriage."

Cassio did not reply at once. By a terrible effort he controlled himself. When the mist cleared from his eyes he turned and looked at the Direttore, and beheld him as in the past, pale, suffering, and ugly, and into his terrible pain there fell one drop of comfort—she would not accept him, he felt sure.

"But," he asked, "have you reflected on what you are doing? Have you written to my country and obtained information? In such cases——"

"I have not written. What would be the good? I know your sister, that she is good and noble, I desire nothing more. I, too, am all alone."

"You are too good. I do not know how properly to express my gratitude. Do not fear you are not understood. I both understand and admire you. I feel greatly myself honoured by your offer, and if it remained with me—but let me assure you I will do all in my power. Do not despair."

He rose and rolled up the pardon, looking at it with ill-concealed bitterness as he towered over the small person of the Direttore, who approached with extended hand to express his thanks. He asked permission to return to his cell and unroll his bed. Everything was granted him. As he threw himself on his comfortless cot he groaned in agony. Paola was not his sister, but his fiancée. For her he had soiled his honour, compromised his future, and broken with his family. She alone remained to him. She had feigned to be his sister in order that she might write to him. And must he lose her now? That other possessed a splendid position, was good and noble. Had he a right to snatch such a brilliant future from Paola? He had sacrificed to her his honour and well-nigh two years of liberty, but she had not asked the sacrifice of him, and was it right that in exchange he should ask for her whole life? In any case she must decide for herself, and at the bottom of his heart he felt secure of her—but it made him wretched to think he had deceived and was still deceiving so noble and excellent a man.

"I will tell him everything, come what may," he decided after an hour of anxious thought, then uncertainty took possession of him once more. "No, I will say nothing. After all, he has no right to know, and I will write when I reach home. After all, he did it only because he wanted to on his own account. His cat-like eyes fill me with distrust; perhaps he would do me some harm."

Later he grew ashamed of his distrust, and cried out aloud in his lonely cell, "Am I indeed vile?"

Approaching the grating, he stood gazing at the white, diaphanous clouds piled up on the horizon; they had assumed the shape and colouring of an alabaster staircase whose luminous steps disappeared into the unscaled heights. Cassio, as he looked, was overwhelmed with an intense homesickness, and suddenly he felt good and pure, as if he had indeed mounted to the last step of those silver stairs and caught from that height a glimpse of his beloved native land. He murmured:

"Had it not been for him I should have languished here for yet a weary time. I might have died or committed some

madness. I will tell everything, let the result be what it may."

He waited anxiously the hour when it would be possible for him to see the Direttore, then addressed him in clear tones :

"See, Signore Direttore, I have been thinking of what you were very good enough to tell me this morning."

"Very well," answered the other, though he feared for the result.

"Before entering upon the subject, please allow me to tell you in a few words of the strange circumstances of my condemnation, for," he added, smiling sadly, "I am bold enough to believe you do not think me guilty."

The other man said never a word.

"Listen. For ten years I have loved a maiden of my own country. She was rich, but an orphan living with her guardian. I was sent away to college and was absent many years. On my return I learned that the poor girl, although she had attained her majority, was kept in subjection and badly treated by her guardian, who had possessed himself of all her property. He gave her nothing, but kept her shut up and frightened with terrible threats. I succeeded in communicating with her, and, finding that she loved me, I vowed to free her and restore her property. 'Let us be married,' she said, 'and I will fly with you.' But as my intentions might involve me in many difficulties, I would not accept her offer. I assisted her to take refuge with friends, and when she was in safety I began my operations.

"And can you guess what I did? I almost think so. I forged the name of her guardian, and since he was very rich and well known at home and abroad, and his credit was illimitable, I obtained a good deal of money. I placed all in the name of the young girl and waited. When the notes fell due, all became known. I had foolishly hoped I should be considered a hero. Instead I was seized, vilified, condemned. My little property was taken, my family disowned me. She, alone of all the world, remains to me, and she, Signore Direttore, is Paola."

The Signore Direttore remained absolutely silent. What, indeed, could he say? He only felt that Cassio's story and his own seemed impossible, though he knew but too well it was but too true. Cassio understood him perfectly.

"It is strange, impossible, is it not? Had I been told it, I would not have believed it."

"Life is strange," said the other at last, and he clenched his hands till the nails penetrated the flesh. "The ways of destiny are indeed mysterious."

"He is resigned," thought Cassio, and he hazarded another remark.

"Life is often a terrible romance." But looking the Direttore in the face he saw an expression of such agony imprinted as caused him to retract his thought of a moment before.

"But see," he continued, "in spite of everything I will do all in my power to prove my gratitude."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me speak. It was my duty to let you know the exact truth, but you have been so good to me that I give you my word of honour, as a gentleman, that I will do everything——"

"What are you saying? What are you saying?" repeated the other in a strange tone, as if he were listening to distant voices, and not to Cassio's words.

"After all, Paola alone can decide. I will tell her everything, as if I were indeed her brother and nothing more."

"Oh, no! No! What are you saying?"

"Nay, if you will allow it I will write this very day, and we will await her reply. Perhaps when it comes I will not need to return to my own country."

"What are you saying?" repeated the Direttore; but now his voice had regained its strength, and, raising his eyes, he looked Cassio full in the face. "You must not write, but return at once to your home, where, I prophesy, every happiness awaits you. From the bottom of my heart I hope so. And yet, who would ever have imagined it! You are right. Life is a terrible romance."

"But," Cassio persisted, "let me write. I beg it of you as a personal favour. You will see the debt I owe you can never be cancelled, and duty should be stronger than love. Paola will be much more fortunate with the Direttore than with me, and above all things I desire her happiness and well-being."

The other listened patiently; once his eyes flashed with a vivid light, but he remained immovable.

"See," he concluded, after having expressed his appreciation of Cassio's generosity, "if your duty is to prove yourself grateful and generous toward the signorina, her duty is no less to make you happy and recompense you for all you have suffered."

"But——" interrupted Cassio.

"One moment—let me finish, please. If the signorina were to act otherwise, she would not be the noble, lofty being I have imagined her, and then my offer would no longer exist. Do you understand? Am I not right?"

But Cassio answered never a word, and the Direttore turned toward the window. And the soul of each was full to overflowing. Cassio thought but of his happiness, and the Direttore reminded himself with bitterness that in any case his dream was lost to him for ever.

ROBERTO BRACCO

FOR THE SAVING OF SOULS

SISTER FILOMENA, her lips close to the grating of the confessional, began humbly :

" Father, I am not sure that I have sinned. Sometimes my conscience tells me that I have and sometimes it tells me that I have not. And when it tells me that I have not, I suffer more than when it tells me that I have."

The father-confessor did not understand. " Speak more clearly, my daughter. And tell me everything. You are so young ! At eighteen one's conscience cannot be trusted. Let me judge. The Lord will give me light. Speak."

" Listen, father ; this is the whole truth. Toward midnight on Monday, No. 7 in ward five, where I have been substituting for Sister Maria since I entered the hospital, received the consolations of religion. The physician on duty said there was no longer any hope. He told me that the suffering could not last long and that death would surely come before dawn.

" ' There will not be many paroxysms,' the doctor added, ' but if you think I am needed, call me without hesitation. The other patients need no attention. They will give no trouble either to you or to me,' and he went to get some sleep.

" I had nothing to do but to administer a teaspoonful of medicine every half-hour. I took my accustomed place beside the bed, and as I sat there, thinking, I began to pray for the soul that was passing."

" For whose soul ? "

" For the soul of the poor man who was suffering."

" It was a man, then ? "

" Did I not say so, father ? "

" You spoke of No. 7, if I am not mistaken, and No. 7, my daughter, has no sex. It does not matter ; go on."

" It was almost three o'clock, when in a weak voice—I could almost hear the death-rattle—he gasped :

" ' Sister Filomena, it has come.' Since midnight he had lain silent almost in a stupor.

" ' Courage, my brother,' I whispered in his ear ; ' courage.' "

"Then slowly, slowly, forcing himself to utter every word clearly, he continued: 'I am ready. It is sad to die at twenty-five, but I am resigned. And perhaps it is better so. I was alone, I was poor. I thought I was a poet, and I was nothing. I thought I was loved, and no one loved me. If I did not have you beside me now, I should die as if abandoned in a desert.'

"He was silent, and I repeated: 'Courage, my brother, God is with you.'

"After a few moments I saw that his deep blue eyes were dim with tears.

"'Will you grant me a favour, Sister Filomena?' he asked.

"'Any that I can, my brother.'

"And he said: 'Do you wish me to die in peace? Do you wish me to die blessing Him who made me?'

"'Every, good Christian should die so,' I answered."

"You answered well, my daughter."

"The dying man said softly: 'Help me to do so.'

"'How, my brother?' I asked.

"'Help me to cross without bitterness the threshold of the life I am leaving. Let me carry with me into the next life the memory of a kindness. Sister Filomena, have pity on a dying man. Give me—a kiss.'"

"A kiss!" the priest exclaimed.

"I repeated again, 'Courage, my brother; prepare yourself for the kiss of God.'"

"Well said, my daughter."

"But with failing breath he begged: 'Grant me this favour. Do you not understand, Sister Filomena, that you will be my salvation? Would you be for ever weighed down with remorse? Would you have me lose my soul? Would you be the cause of my damnation?'

"And you, my daughter? And you?'

"Father, I was frightened by those words. I reflected that, dying in bitterness, he might run the risk of everlasting damnation, and I, too, if I should be the cause. I reflected that every minute that passed death took a step toward him, and that the end must come before dawn. In the quiet room, I could hear his laboured breathing. There were but few patients in the ward, and they were sleeping peacefully. The lights had been lowered. The white beds, in the dim light, looked like tombs. A great sadness came upon me. I stooped and kissed him. I barely caught the words, 'Thanks, thanks.' Then I began to pray again."

"And where did you kiss him?" The father-confessor by his quiet voice tried to conceal his anxiety, the perplexity that was troubling his judgment.

"Father, it was almost dark," Sister Filomena answered quietly, "but I think I kissed him on the mouth."

"An imprudence, an imprudence, to say the least! I understand that it was done with good intention, my daughter. You were moved by a sentiment of Christian piety—sublime, if you will, but mistaken—I might almost say dangerous. On the brow instead of the mouth would have been better; and that would have been sufficient to save his soul. Still, you kissed a man who was almost dead."

"That is what I said, also."

"And now that he is duly dead and buried—*requiescat in pace*—we will think no more about him."

"But father, it is not quite so. He is living."

"Living!"

"Yes. He was in a dying condition until dawn. With the first rays of the sun came relief. The doctor, on entering the ward, could not conceal his surprise from the sick man, on whose lips there was a slight smile. He made a careful examination, gave him a hypodermic injection, and said in a low tone: 'It is strange, strange. Perhaps we shall get the better of the disease.'"

"But that is a disaster!" exclaimed the father in dismay.

"Father, what are you saying!"

"This is a serious matter, my daughter. If you kissed a living man on the lips and he continues to live, I do not know what is to be done. With death at the door it was different. All would have adjusted itself in the sight of the Lord. But if he lives, the Divine Clemency may be seriously perplexed. Let us speak openly. We must save appearances."

After pondering a little, he questioned further. "Tell me, daughter, what sort of a man is this doctor?"

"Oh, a good man!"

"But his standing as a physician?"

"He is one of the best."

"And how is the sick man to-day?"

"He is better."

"You are lost!"

"Oh, my God!"

"You still dare to utter His name?"

"I am a wicked sinner, father?"

"Unworthy to wear that habit!" But as Sister Filomena burst into bitter sobbing, the priest spoke less cruelly. "I cannot yet see my way clear. You told me just now that when your conscience tells you you have not sinned, you suffer more than when it tells you the opposite. How is such a contradiction possible? How am I to understand that?"

"I do not know, father. I feel what I feel, and I am confessing it to you just as it is."

"And you repent, now, of what you have done?"

"If it is a sin, I must repent."

"But do not think that I will give you absolution now. We will wait a few days. Who knows? We will see what turn the illness of this young man takes, and act accordingly. Now go. I do not wish to hear more to-day. And when you approach the bed, blush; you understand?"

"I always blush, father."

"That is well."

A few days later Sister Filomena came again to her father-confessor.

"Well, how is No. 7?"

"I think he is much improved."

"And what do the doctors think?"

"They say that he will recover."

"My child, there is no longer any hope for you!"

"That is what I told him."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that I was lost on account of him, and that if I had known that he would live I should not have kissed him."

"And what did this healthy poet answer?"

"He answered that he did not desire my perdition, and that he, in his turn, would save my soul."

"He might have done that by dying!"

"Yes, father; and so he has sworn to me that on the day when they tell him he has fully recovered he will kill himself for me."

This was a new complication. The priest reflected for a few moments; then with an air of resignation and resolve, he said:

"On the whole, it is better to give you absolution. If that sort of a man begins to die again, we shall have to begin once more at the very beginning."

GIULIO DE FRENZI

A SURVIVOR

MY dear Ugo—After three years of absolute silence, I suppose it will seem somewhat impertinent to say that this is an answer to the long letter in which, barely landed in New York, you narrated to me your impressions of the voyage, and your plans for a new and industrious life. Yet really this is no falsehood. This morning, while arranging some papers, I accidentally came across your good letter of April 19, 1900.

"Poor Ugo!" I exclaimed, "he was so quick to send me news of himself, while I——" Then a lightning inspiration of rescue flashed to my mind, one of those great ideas which cause in even a mediocre man like me the proud feeling that he is the Napoleon or the Bismarck of his own life. "Suppose I write to Ugo!" And instantly seizing upon this idea with an incredible fervour of hope, I asked myself what had led me to discover your letter, and with it the precious recollection of your friendship, just to-day? I am sorry that I am an atheist, for I should like to thank some one, and do not know whom.

But I diverge. Still, old friend, it is all very well to be a sceptic, but a day like this does somewhat upset one's mind. Do you know why I was arranging my papers? I intended to kill myself. I had made an appointment with the last friend, the only one who never betrays us. At eight o'clock in the evening, the dinner hour, I had ordered a dinner worthy of the tête-à-tête. Hardly should the champagne have slightly intoxicated me, when I would have sunk into the loving arms of the one who would never allow me to escape. Or if, as in your merry days in Rome, you still prefer gastronomy to gallantry, let me tell you that a good revolver was to have been my dessert. Instead, nothing of the kind has happened; I dined alone, drank my modest chianti, and burned neither my brain nor anything else for a single reason; this morning I found your letter!

I seem to see your handsome prosperous countenance assume an expression of justifiable amazement. "Have I then become a thaumaturgist? What the devil could that letter of mine have contained to check a candidate for suicide on the verge of the abyss?" and as dramatists would say, "And how can that egoist Piero Galleschi,

who, when we were together from evening till morning, did nothing but flee draughts and violent emotions, ever contemplate, even for one moment, a proposition so notoriously contrary to the most elementary principles of hygiene ? ”

Ah, I understand that I must tell you all. After three years of silence, this seems to you an unexpected and excessive change. Have patience, my poor Ugo, and listen ; that is to say, read.

You left me three years ago, fairly happy. Alone in the world, decorously ignorant, gifted with those small vices that lend charm to existence. Absolutely lacking passions good or evil, a moderate spender of my income, which I enjoyed to the last cent without ever spending a cent more. For my age, my position, and my character I had all the requisites for a man to have the right to call himself happy. Possibly, to escape the tedium of restaurants and extempore love affairs, I should have ended by marrying, had I met a woman who would not disturb the marvellous equilibrium of my life.

But this equilibrium was disturbed soon enough. Toward autumn of that same year 1900, I began no longer to feel well. A draught not avoided in time, an unusual occurrence, gave me a cough ; I suffered with fever and weakness, lost energy, and after a few months had grown thin. I was nothing. The doctors so agreed in reassuring me of this that finally I began to suspect that I was threatened with, at least from my point of view, premature death. This suspicion, together with all the symptoms of disease, aggravated by the various treatments, was not exactly calculated to enliven my days, still less my nights ; I lost patience for the first time in my life. It was the beginning of the transformation.

I therefore went to Trabalza to ask his illustrious and expensive opinion. I went to him—why should I deny it ?—somewhat anxious, and when, entering his luxurious consulting room, I felt his cruel glance, which in a moment had laid bare my soul, I was tempted to lie to him, or to ask of him the usual compassionate falsehood. But then, mechanically repeating, with the words already meditated, the story of my illness, almost without realising, I led us both to the opinion of the dreaded truth. He frowned in silence, then requested me to disrobe. I assure you, Ugo, I was unnerved, but to conceal my distress, I said tragically : “ Listen, doctor. I do not wish to be deceived, whatever your opinion.”

He made me recline on a couch that seemed a catafalque, then began pounding me and listening all over my body. Under those icy hands I shivered. He suspended his examination for a moment, and remained absorbed in thought, without even looking at me. I tried to read my fate in his wrinkled face. But almost immediately he ordered me to rise. Again, this time standing, I must submit to the torture. Sounding my thin chest, he tried to surprise the secret

of my malady, while my anxiety became unendurable. All cowardice vanished in my desire for the truth. I desperately implored him :

"Tell me, tell me ! I am alone in the world, and death does not alarm me. I do not wish to be deceived like a child."

Trabalza took off his spectacles, polished them methodically and put them back on to his nose. I, nude before him, waiting, felt compassion for and ashamed of myself.

"Dress yourself !" he ordered, his voice so much softened that my heart swelled almost to tears. Why this softened voice ? Because he would liberate me from terror or deprive me of all hope ?

"Speak ! speak ! I wish to know. I must know !"

The good doctor, instead of answering, repeated some questions as to my age, the appearance of the first symptoms, the illnesses of which my parents died, etc. Then, with the air of one who hopes to be forgiven for bad news :

"I will obey your orders," he said, "although I am sincerely sorry. You have tuberculosis."

"A bad case ?" I stammered stupidly.

Dr. Trabalza made a vague gesture. "You have no right to conceal anything from me," I burst out. "How long can I live ?"

The doctor seemed absorbed for a few moments in deep meditation. He was calculating the residue of my life.

"Three years at the most," was his final judgment.

Three years, and then the forces of life would be exhausted ! There would be the melancholy sunsets contemplated from a bed ; clumsy indifferent nurses ; two or three impatient envious cousins ; the notary perhaps, the priest certainly, summoned in the fatal terror of the nothingness beyond, and then, then, a gasp, a groan, one's eyes distended to receive the last ray of sunlight, rigid hands outstretched to clutch the fleeting life ! Then I would be dressed in a frock-coat, like poor Peppino Canepa. A fine casket, lined with silk ; a great funeral, with wreaths of flowers sent by the heirs and my friends of the restaurants ; ten lines of the usual death notice. My friends every now and then would tell of my pranks ; but of my name, my person, my deeds—all would sink into oblivion, save those student escapades, which might for a time serve to enliven the company.

Thus coldly was my immediate future outlined before my anguished soul as I left Trabalza's house. When one is or believes himself healthy, he lives from one day to the next, forgetting, almost unconscious, of the inevitable end, as if his life were to go on indefinitely ; passions, thoughts, plans, are with him based on an illusion of permanency and only the fatigue of old age gradually insinuates to his mind the feeling of decay. What matters it then ?

He has already accomplished his destiny. But for a condemned one who knows he is to die, and die young, the idea of totally disappearing from the world, of being absolutely and irrevocably separated from all that he loves, makes him suffer. The thought that soon no one will trouble more about him, neither pity nor curse him, that the children once caressed by him will grow up in ignorance of him, that he will be, in short, as though he had never lived !

Had I at least a son—some one in whom I might hope that my existence would be perpetuated ! But would not he, too, have been a predestined victim of fate, a sickly being ? Besides, why should I regret that an insignificant man, a solitary egotist, left no record of himself on earth ?

I must die. Very well. I would die gaily, thoughtlessly ; I would pass beyond without seeing the road, without realising that I was traversing it.

I possessed about 400,000 francs. I divided it into three annuities and prepared to spend it to do honour to what was to come.

With a splendid racing automobile I carried Henriette Sonillard, who was all the rage at the Olympia, off to Nice with me. Gay, cold, extravagant, this girl was exactly suited to my case. She introduced me to the *demi-monde* society of the Riviera, where she had many acquaintances.

Carnival arrived in a merry whirl of gaiety, and my automobile, covered with red roses, triumphed in the *course des fleurs*. Henriette scattered roses and twenty-franc pieces right and left. Thanks to her, I had secured just what I needed—never to be alone with my secret thought. And gradually this thought had retired to a corner of my mind, waiting—

Early in the spring I liquidated my relations honourably, with Henriette, to return to the capital, in pursuit of a Roman lady whom I had met six or seven times at Monte Carlo.

Months passed rapidly. When summer came, I followed Sisi to St. Moritz, then to Viareggio. Here I happened to run my auto over a good-for-nothing, who, having had his leg broken, found it convenient to sue me, which cost me ten thousand francs and many annoyances ; but even this was useful in helping me not to think.

That winter was most brilliant. I did not miss a ball or reception. A year passed ; another, in a perpetual whirl of artificial but intense enjoyment. I had two thoroughbreds for morning rides in the villa Borghese. I flirted with patrician beauties, was elected vice-president of the Lawn Tennis Club. All thought me a happy man. •

I had consulted no other physicians, taken no temperatures, and abolished mirrors in my bathroom. While dressing I avoided look-

ing at my form. I wished to forget, ignore. Sometimes, facing my secret thought suddenly, the idea of my impending death amazed me like the record of a tormenting nightmare which I had shaken off. But instantly I drove the thought back into shadows, that it might not dissipate the kindly stupor which helped me to run gently down the last slope. I turned my eyes away from the goal. From sports and orgies I demanded the heavy sleep that knows no dreams. And the third year: this year began like the others, but full of worse follies, more prodigal insanities.

One day, early in April, my administrator considered it his duty to warn me that there remained to me barely 38,000 francs of my capital.

Half an hour later I rang Dr. Trabalza's door-bell. Fortunately, I could see him at once.

The doctor gazed at me in his usual scrutinising way, but did not seem to remember ever having seen me. Two years and five months had elapsed. I had to recall to his mind the consultation, the diagnosis, the verdict. He stroked his beard, silent and thoughtful. Then:

"Take off your clothes," said he, brusquely.

The examination was even longer and more minute than before. While the doctor was sounding my chest, and listening with his icy ear, his cold hands upon it, a diabolical suspicion suddenly came into my mind and caused a sudden outburst of rage. The doctor and I from time to time exchanged almost hostile glances. His questions and my answers were pronounced in tones of sarcastic impertinence.

"What treatments have you had during this time?" he asked at a certain point.

"None of any kind," I said boldly and haughtily.

"I thought so!" murmured he, as though under the weight of extreme and dreadful disillusion.

He began wandering uneasily about the room. But when he passed me I seized him inexorably by the coat sleeve—

"Well?" I asked. I know not whether ironically or threateningly.

He decided to speak.

"I have something to tell you which will please you greatly——"

He smiled and spoke almost with set teeth. He hated me.

"——yes, greatly. If not my diagnosis, at least my prognosis was wrong. You are cured!"

I grasped him by the shoulders, pushing him to and fro, nude as I was, in a momentary paroxysm of rage.

"Cured!" I cried. "You are jesting! It is not possible—it is not allowable! This is a fraud! I must not be cured!"

The doctor believed me actually insane.

"No, no. I am not jesting. Calm yourself. I repeat, you are cured. And I am surprised that this news does not fill you with joy——"

"Of course! and my money?" I cried in his face, like a frantic creditor.

"Your money?"

I had to tell him the wretched story. But as I told it, recalling the irreparable ridiculousness of the situation, I was so overcome by a sense of degradation that it served to calm me and restore my exact perception of the reality.

"You have learned, I fancy, not to trust too much to the verdicts of science," pronounced Dr. Trabalza, like a moralist, when I had finished. Then, possibly dissimulating a scruple under a slight smile: "How much have you spent for this instruction?"

"About 400,000 francs," I groaned.

The doctor was thoughtful for a moment, as though hesitating to express the idea that passed through his mind. But finally he took courage and uttered it.

"You will see that, in time, the lesson is worth it."

I shook my head, incredulous.

He no longer hated me. He understood that the scattering of my 400,000 francs was a disaster at least equal to the failure of his scientific glory. Such was my opinion, and I went in haste to express it to a lawyer friend, to ask if he believed it possible to bring suit for damages against Dr. Trabalza. A new sentiment was born in me—a sentiment of sympathy, I might almost say, of fellow feeling for the poor scamp who, two years before, having been run over by my automobile, had caused me quarrels, expenses and annoyances of all sorts. Had I not been ruined by Dr. Trabalza? And had I not a right to an adequate indemnity? But the lawyer, although a friend, laughed in my face, and did not even condescend to accompany me to the door. This lack of regard was sufficient to prove to me that I was ruined indeed, and hopelessly so.

There were three courses open to me: work, suicide, or to continue by expedients and deceit the life I had led of late. This at first seemed to me of the three the most practical method. I knew so many others who lived thus like gentlemen, and who often, plucking their geese, could not have, like me, justified themselves by remembering that in their turn they had once been plucked.

But, Ugo, when one thinks the matter over carefully, the profession of elegant scoundrel is considered easy by those moralists who praise the virtue of human sweat only when this, so to speak, is shed upon the soil of the field, or the desk of an office. But rest assured that from my small observations, the man of the world,

forced to live by expedients, earns his living by the sweat of his brow as much, if not more, than the farmer or clerk ; and, believe me, even the gesture with which he signs a note is as sacred as that of one who sows grain. Oh, no one can ever say how hard some rascals work that they may live without working !

Now, since my earliest infancy I had been accustomed to actual idleness, the idleness ignorant of its true value, natural idleness. It is not so simple a matter as might at first sight appear, to liberate oneself in a day from all the precepts and moral prejudices with which tradition, education, religion, and various other venerable things have inoculated our blood. Lombroso and his disciples, whom may the god of lunatic asylums bless, have studied hereditary depravity. Why, so far, has it never occurred to any one that hereditary nobility was worthy of study ? In short, I ended by discarding the idea of rascality. There remained for me, therefore, two courses : actual work or suicide.

Work ; but how ? For whom ? And where ? In the city over which my automobile and mistresses had scattered the double perfume of *Cœur de Jeannette* and benzine, could I transform myself into a clerk, an insurance agent, a journalist ?

During my long hesitation the remnant of my patrimony was vanishing.

I saw that, all things considered, it suited me better to choose suicide. I had been accustomed to the thought of death for some time, and was convinced that Dr. Trabalza, in predicting my death within not more than three years, had proved himself a poor physician, but an excellent prophet. I forgot that the origin of a predicted fact is not seldom found in this same prophecy. But suicide seemed to me a much more dignified end to my life than the horrible suffering of a chronic malady. I should die when and as I pleased, since I had relative liberty as to the hour, the day, perhaps the month.

This morning, discovering that I had only nine thousand three hundred and twenty-five francs and a few sous, I saw that this liberty was becoming restricted. It was necessary to kill myself before suicide should become for me a vulgar or cowardly act.

And it was then, old fellow, that your saving letter came into my hands. If you do not wish to resign the office which you will presently occupy in regard to my destiny, listen with kind attention to the following proposition :

Can you take me as partner, as clerk, as porter in your transatlantic business ?

You were an idle, good-for-nothing, worse than I, when you left Naples ; you have made a fortune with Marsala. Ungrateful one, how many times have I paid your bill at restaurants ?

Ugo, I await your yes, because it must be a yes—for two months, until the middle of September, at Frascati, where in the strictest economy I am preparing myself to become, within sixty days, a hard-working, self-made man.

Even as a porter, you know, I have the health—the health of—I cannot describe it. I embrace you.

PIERO.

LUCIANO ZÜCCOLI

THE MERRY COMPANY

GIGI CAVALIERI, better known as Pivione, came out of the Porta Romana and, disregarding the fact that his shoes lacked heels and that he had no umbrella, struck out towards the open country in the pouring rain. He heard his feet splash in the mud and felt the water dripping from the brim of his faded hat and falling upon his neck. His drenched coat gave off the odour of damp wool. His trousers were bespattered with mud.

But this man had no thought for the inconveniences which had often been the lot of his laborious existence. He advanced at a rapid pace and at the same time with great caution. At one moment he glanced backward and at the next he fixed his eyes on a row of poplar trees ahead, which were somewhat obscured by the rain and fog. At that hour, about three o'clock in the afternoon, and in such adverse weather, Gigi Cavalieri had the luck to meet nothing more than a wagon and a mendicant friar during his entire walk of ten kilometres.

Just as his legs were beginning to feel heavy, partly from fatigue and partly from the weight of the mud that clung to his shoes, Pivione stopped before a small hut and, casting a few hurried glances around, quickly took a key from his pocket, opened the door, entered and shut it after him. Once within he clambered up a ladder and reached a squalid little room.

Here there was a bed, and lying on it, fully dressed, a blond-haired girl. Her swollen lips and bloodshot eyes were evidence of a strong fever. At the sound of the creaking of the ladder she slowly turned her head towards the door, and at the sight of Gigi she opened her lips in a forced smile.

"How is she?" he asked in an undertone of a lean old woman seated at the foot of the bed.

"How do you suppose she is? Always the same!" answered the old woman without moving.

Gigi made a gesture of displeasure and drew from his pocket a parcel carefully wrapped in waxed paper.

"I have brought the quinine," he said.

Wherever he stood he left footprints of mud and little pools of

water. Taking off his hat and coat, he bent over the girl, who was doing her utmost to maintain a smile. The poor fellow looked at her for a long time. His pale face, bearing the marks of vice, sleeplessness, crime and fear, suddenly assumed an expression of kindly tenderness. He passed his hand through the beautiful blond hair of the sick girl and then placed his palm on her feverish forehead.

"How are you, Giulia?" he asked very gently.

With an effort Giulia answered, "Better—I feel better."

Pivione continued looking at her in silence. At times it seemed as if his eyes were attempting to gaze into her soul. He did not alter his position until the old woman took him by the arm and handed him a glass of water. "Are you going to give her the medicine you have brought?"

Gigi took a single powder from the package, poured its contents on a wafer, and then, gently raising the girl's head, administered the first dose of quinine.

"If she could undress and go to bed, she would feel much better," he said to the old lady.

"She is not strong enough and I cannot manage it," answered the woman. "Perhaps you could help me."

Gigi roughly intercepted the arm that she was already reaching toward the girl. "No," he said. "Listen to me." He threw a glance in the direction of the sick girl, who had already closed her eyes, and then descended the ladder followed by the old lady. "Listen!" he repeated, when they were but a few paces from the door. "You must give Giulia one or two of those powders every two hours and by to-morrow evening the fever will have disappeared. But don't undress her; cover her up well if she is cold, but remember don't undress her."

Then, lowering his voice, he added: "It is necessary that both of you be prepared for flight."

The poor old woman wrung her hands in despair and opened wide her diminutive eyes.

"What on earth has happened now?" she exclaimed.

Instinctively, Pivione looked about him; then, in a low and rapid tone, speaking with clenched teeth, he added, "They are looking for me! They are looking for me, Tonino, Stringhella, Bollo Rosso, and Spugna. You know his whistle, don't you? He will whistle three times, but will not enter."

The poor lady again gave expression to her feelings by a gesture of despair.

"Let us understand each other," continued Gigi. "You must save her, even at the cost of carrying her on your shoulders if she is too weak to walk. As a last resource, throw her in some ditch."

If you make a mistake, there will be some one to settle accounts with you. Take this money ; it amounts to some two hundred lire. It will be sufficient until Giulia is again able to work. Let us understand each other. I will not remain in prison for ever, and I will find you even after ten or fifteen years. I will learn what has happened to Giulia, and if she should be in trouble, I myself shall settle your case."

She wrung her hands until they crackled. "Understand," he continued, "that it does not matter whether or not Giulia thinks that I am at my country-seat—say it was for political reasons. Tell her of the many misfortunes I have suffered. Moreover, this is not the first time I have had to steal to maintain her respectably. You can, if necessary, even tell her that—but one more word. The police are searching for all of us. Some one will surely escape. If not Spugna, Stringhella will come to give you warning. Remember this: if three whistles are heard, you must take her away, even if it be on your shoulders. If it is one long whistle, it will mean that you are in no immediate danger but that I am caught. Now I will go and bid her farewell."

"And what then ?" interrupted the old lady. "Do you expect to be arrested ?"

Gigi answered this query by a shrug of the shoulders.

"But tell me what has happened," insisted the old lady. "Is it a thing of great importance ?"

"In answer, he stretched his right hand in the air and then suddenly clenched his fingers.

"Strangling !" shouted the old lady.

"Keep still, you fool !" said Gigi, seizing her roughly. "I did not commit the crime, and I can prove it if necessary. Bollo Rosso is the culprit, and he has ruined us all. Besides, it is unnecessary. I knew that Bollo was not one of our kind, but the others insisted on taking him into our company."

Stopping short, he faced about and hastened up the ladder.

Giulia had evidently found some relief. She had undone her blond hair to diminish the pressure upon her head. She looked intently at her brother, and then said softly, "Are you going to stay ?"

"No, I must go," he answered brusquely ; "they are waiting for me."

"Are you coming back ?"

"To-night, or perhaps to-morrow morning. You are to take these powders ; do you understand ?"

"Yes."

Then both became silent and looked at each other affectionately. The young girl had apparently improved, for the feverish glow had

disappeared from her forehead. Her youthful comeliness returned in measure as the fever loosened its hold.

"If perchance I should not return," Gigi blurted out unexpectedly, "see to it that I am kept informed of all that you do."

"Why, do you not intend to come back?" asked the poor girl, trembling.

The man drew on his coat, which was still quite wet, and tossed his hat on his head.

"Good-bye," he said.

Giulia, long since accustomed not to ask questions a second time, gently stretched out her arms as if to embrace her brother, but he, who had never kissed his sister, feigned not to see and turned toward the door.

When about to descend the ladder, he turned about suddenly and approached the bed. Again that tender expression of sympathy illumined the hard and pallid face.

"Take the powders!" he said, in explanation of his strange conduct.

He moved toward the door and went down the ladder without turning, but before going, he again reminded the woman: "Three whistles, take her on your shoulders. If only one, I am arrested. See that the doors are well locked."

Outside, the rain was falling in torrents.

The trial of the Merry Company had aroused an interest in Milan which was not usual for such common crimes as those of which these men were accused.

Gigi Cavaliere was the first to fall into the hands of the police. He tried to avoid arrest by shooting at the face of one of the police; and the shot took effect, almost destroying the man's countenance. Gigi's arrest was followed by that of Antonio Stucci, generally called Tonino, then Stringhella. Spugna was captured while enjoying a dance with some ladies on a field outside of the Porta Tenaglia.

It was a year before Bollo Rosso was captured. The police were on the point of giving up all hope of getting him, when one evening he captured a pickpocket in the Scala and took him triumphantly to the nearest station in the district. The inspector on duty was not a little surprised to see before him the notorious leader of the Merry Company, and naturally the petty thief and Bollo, who was charged with murder and highway robbery, were both held.

Bollo Rosso, in bringing to justice this petty thief, whom he had caught stealing a gold chain from a merchant who was listening to the music in the park, had intended to play a practical joke, but the trick surely had not resulted to his advantage. Nevertheless, he explained to the inspector that this act of honesty was the beginning

of his reforms, and that if he were set free, he would promise to bring to justice at least ten thieves a day.

The inspector smiled and sent him to prison.

The distinguishing characteristic of this company was its joviality. Bollo Rosso had infused into them a real love for jests and pleasant-~~ies~~. To be sure, his associates assaulted passers-by and broke into jewelry shops, but it was all done with grace, celerity, and humour.

For this reason, they had received the name, "The Merry Company."

The most famous joke had been played on Carlo Matirotti, a rich old druggist. This miser, for such he was, dressed always in rags, ate but sparingly and was never known to have a light at night, for candles were too expensive a luxury. He led a life of constant fear and suspicion.

One night, Bollo Rosso, Gigi, and Stringhella succeeded in forcing an entrance into his house and completely sacked it. Well satisfied with their expedition, they were about to leave, when Bollo expressed a desire to see old Matirotti. To satisfy this caprice, he made his way to the miser's bedroom, carrying a lighted candle.

Carlo Matirotti was sleeping soundly with his mouth open. That black and toothless mouth naturally attracted the attention of the thief. He looked around to see whether he could not find something with which that repulsive aperture could be filled and, seeing nothing more suitable, decided to make use of the candle. No joke could have been more original. The old man, awakened with a start, sprang to a sitting posture and bit the candle between his toothless jaws. Frightened by the scene, he was on the point of crying out, when Bollo, to save the vicinity from such a disturbance, extinguished both the candle and the man.

With the exception of this very unsavoury incident, which really brought an end to that gay company, these five companions were capable of only repeated attacks on property. They were sober, humble, and well-behaved.

Gigi Cavalieri had lived apart from the others and pretended to be an electrician employed by a small establishment that no one knew. His friends often offered him participation in their adventures, and he usually chose those of little risk even though less lucrative. His sister was a seamstress and earned about three lire a day. From time to time Gigi would bring home a bag of money. He had been one of the jolliest of the company, although he had always been grave and taciturn at home. Then, gradually, he became grave even in the company of his associates and at times he seemed melancholy and restless. In the meantime Giulia was becoming prettier, and her form was assuming more graceful contours. With all her cleverness, she had never suspected that her brother was anything

but an electrician. She loved Gigi blindly, and he, who had never given his sister much thought since her childhood, finally began to consider what the outcome would be, now that every one looked at her as she walked along the street.

His first prison sentence had separated them for several months, and she, in order not to live alone, had asked her old aunt to come and live with her. During the time of his imprisonment the police had watched her closely and investigated the nature of her occupation. Convinced that she made an honest living, they left her in peace, but when Gigi was released he was alarmed at discovering that his sister had been under surveillance, and from that day his manner changed. On account of a harmless jest, he gave Bollo a severe beating, and had he had a knife, probably would have killed him. Bollo, on the other hand, did have a dagger, but as his right hand was pinned beneath him, he had to content himself with the beating. Then both went and drank together.

Giulia had been accustomed to seeing her brother in trouble with the authorities, for he boasted of Socialistic principles, and the government often suppressed this nonsense. Furthermore, Giulia, fearing him at least as much as she loved him, never questioned Gigi. She obeyed him implicitly and was very happy when he came home to sup with her.

She had neither protested nor attempted to discuss with Gigi the idea of secluding her and her old aunt in the hut outside the Porta Romana. It was absolute folly, to be sure, for it made her work much more difficult. To return it to her customers, the old woman had to wait until some cart passed in front of the house, then pay carriage to the point of destination. Besides this expense it consumed a whole day. Ultimately Gigi was seized with the grave suspicion that some one might take his sister away. He literally tortured her with incessant questions. He would sometimes hide behind the window blinds and watch suspicious-looking passers to see whether they glanced at Giulia's room. He asked her not to sing, so that the neighbours might not hear her. As to going out for a walk, that was out of the question, but Giulia became accustomed even to this.

The transport to Milan and back cost so much that her earnings were cut in half, and, naturally, life became more burdensome, but Gigi would not hear of returning to the city. Rather than bring his sister back amongst rough men and corrupt women, he had accepted the offer of Bollo, who had his eyes on Matirotti. This was an opportunity for a grand stroke! The time had drawn near. The miser had withdrawn his money from the bank, and it was necessary to strike while he still had it. Then, having received his share, Gigi, free from care, would be able to be near his sick sister for a long time.

But Bollo Rosso's joke frustrated all these plans. The newspapers were full of stories concerning the crime, and in many the particulars were absurd and exaggerated. As for Bollo, he was absolutely disgusted with the reports in the papers, for he was unable to find a true and exact reproduction of one of his simple crimes. A short time before he fell into the hands of the police, he had expressed a desire to send to the papers the true story of his little joke. Had he not feared that his tale would have been inserted in a chronicle, he would have done so.

A year and a half passed before the five thieves were brought before the judge. The hardened and sinister features of these malefactors made a deep impression on the public. Pivione attracted attention not only by his height and leanness, but still more by his brilliant eyes, which seemed to be illumined by some sad thought. Bollo Rosso, small and withered and with features typical of a toper beyond redemption, stood on his right. His eyes never rested for more than a single moment on any one object, but nothing that occurred around him escaped his notice.

The latter declared before the most illustrious judge of this noble court and the renowned members of that jury that he had reformed, and had decided upon an honest and laborious life. But the judge interrupted him and warned him that the court was no place for idle jokes.

"But permit me to remind you, most honourable sir, that I have arrested a thief," added Bollo, as he was resuming his seat.

At this the visitors burst out laughing, and even Bollo joined in the merriment.

"No use, the populace is fond of me," he said to Spugna in an undertone; "I am attractive."

Spugna had to laugh. He was twenty-two years old. The livid colour of the knife scar that ran across his cheek from his right ear to his chin reinforced the ugly appearance of his greenish-yellow skin. Happy because he had had no hand in the murder, he considered himself a victim of the judge's pedantry, who continually asked him questions concerning his history.

"What has all this to do with the murder? On that night, I——"

They were trying to convict him of two assaults and four cases of robbery. But he was obstinate in asserting that he took no part in the murder, the other accusations seeming of very little importance.

Stringhella, who, with Bollo Rosso and Pivione, was accused of the murder, stood next to Spugna. He became so enraged at the latter's attitude toward the affair that he stuck his elbow in the

young man's ribs with a force that rendered him breathless for several minutes.

The fifth, Antonio Stucci, called Tonino, caused a great deal of merriment by his squeaky voice and by the curious expressions he assumed by the aid of his crooked back. He, too, was very happy because he was not on trial for murder. Sitting with his hands in his pockets and with a broad smile always on his lips, he seemed more a spectator than a man on trial for robbery. By nodding his head, he approved or disapproved of the judge's statements. As for the rest, he knew nothing, because in his youth, as he said, he had suffered from a disease of the brain.

Then the judge settled his eyes on Pivione, who was gloomy to distraction. He had made a weak defence against the accusation that he had been an accomplice in the murder of Matirotti. During his cross-examination he continually cast his eyes over the spectators as if expecting to see a familiar face.

When the judge learned from a witness that Pivione had a sister, he expressed his surprise at not seeing her in the cage with him.

"What does your sister do?" he asked Pivione.

"She works," answered Pivione, at the same time jumping to his feet as if he wished to leap out of the cage.

"Ah! she works—pursues the same trade that you do?"

"She is a tailor—she earns an honest living."

"Did you live with her?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had she any idea of what you did?"

"No, sir; she thought I was an electrician."

"And how did you deceive her for so long a time?" asked the judge incredulously. "Did she not finally see what you really did? You have been sentenced three times; how did you keep the true cause of your imprisonment from her?"

Tonino looked furtively at his companion, wondering what answer he could give to such an argument.

"The first time," answered Pivione, "I told her I was condemned for political reasons."

The audience laughed.

"The second time I told her that I had to go to a foreign province to do some professional work," continued the thief, casting a look of hatred at the spectators, "and the third time I again gave political reasons."

"Did your sister always believe you?"

"Always."

"She must have been strangely innocent, that sister of yours," added the judge. "But all this is not clear to me. Be seated."

Gigi surveyed the audience, then surlily sat down.

"Do you know her?" asked the judge of a witness, who was an inhabitant of the Porta Garibaldi quarter.

"Yes, your honour."

"What does she do?"

"At one time she worked, but that was before Pivione was accused of murder."

At that instant, Bollo Rosso, who had been watching carefully a spot where the audience was very crowded, rose to his feet and shouted:

"Look! Look! Look!"

"What is the trouble?" the judge asked angrily.

"Most illustrious sir, I see among the spectators my little thief! There he is! He is at this moment making faces at me! It is the young man I arrested almost two years ago!"

In fact, a young man did escape from the crowd and run down the hall.

"He came to see me, your honour," continued Bollo, "which proves the truth of what I have said. I had already started out upon an honest life; I arrested a thief——"

"If you do not stop your chattering," exclaimed the judge, not a little annoyed, "I shall have you sent back to your cell."

At this Bollo sat down.

"That was really the fellow," he whispered to Pivione. "I am glad I saw him after so long a time."

But Gigi did not hear, for he had fixed his eyes on the witness, and was even bending forward a little the better to learn what he had to say.

"Then she worked," continued the judge; "the girl used to work. What does she do now?"

The witness, casting a glance in the direction of Gigi, hesitated.

"You understand, your excellency, that I do not know whether I should say——" he murmured.

"But you must speak. Do you fear the truth?"

"Well, if I must—after her brother was arrested, Giulia, that is her name, worked no longer. I have seen her all dressed up, going to the theatre with a wealthy man."

"What is the matter?" Bollo asked Pivione, seeing that the latter was viciously beating on the bars of his cage.

"I understand," said the judge; "but as long as the prisoner remained, did his sister conduct herself properly?"

"The very best! She worked as a seamstress and earned considerable money. He was very fond of her and treated her with the greatest consideration. Whether she really loved or rather feared him, I do not know. They lived near the Porta Garibaldi for a long

time, but later they disappeared, and I found out that they had moved outside the Porta Romana."

"Just one moment," the judge interrupted. "Prisoner, why did you move?"

Pivione acted as if deaf. He stood with his arms hanging loosely at his sides and his head sunk deep on his chest.

"Answer, you fool!" put in Tonino.

"It is not true!" almost shouted Pivione. "It is impossible that my sister should go to the theatre and dress stylishly! The witness is slandering her."

"That is not the point," added the judge. "I desire to know what manner of life you led after you left Porta Garibaldi. Why did you suddenly disappear with your sister?"

"Because I had perceived that some young men frequently passed under her window and tried to attract her attention," Pivione answered intensely.

"Was that the only motive?"

"Yes, sir; I did not wish them to see her."

"Well said!" whispered Tonino.

Then Gigi exclaimed very firmly, "I did not want them to see her. I did not want her to have a lover. I did not want to see her life ruined!"

"All this is very strange," the judge said to the jurymen at his right.

The latter made an incredulous gesture as if to say, "Bah!"

"So that is the reason you took her away from the city."

"Yes, sir; ten kilometres from the Porta Romana. There she would see no one. Do you understand?"

"But how did you live?"

"She continued to work, although she earned less, and I——"

"You kept on stealing," interrupted the judge. "Did you think that you could keep her honest, with such an example?"

"She did not know. She believed everything I said. Besides, I intended to change my mode of life, but I met Bollo Rosso one day and forgot all my good resolutions. My sister was sick at the time, and I did not have a cent even to buy medicine. I bought some for her as soon as I got the money."

"And Giulia knew nothing of your thefts, of your assaults?" insisted the judge.

"No."

"And you," the judge asked the witness, "do you believe that the girl knew nothing of her brother's acts?"

"Yes, sir; I am sure that she did not suspect."

"All this is not very clear to me," said the judge.

As the day was well advanced, the hearing was adjourned.

Giulia Cavalieri who lived in a six-room apartment on the Cor- Venezia, was summoned for next day.

And thus the public saw this dramatic episode resulting from a comedy presented by the Merry Company.

On the following day all the newspapers told how Gigi, so affected by what he had heard concerning his sister, suffered frequent fits, and how, before the guard became aware of his intentions, he had twice attempted to commit suicide.

Some amateur journalist, in pursuit of notoriety, succeeded in finding Giulia's aunt, and told her the complete story. She, in defence of her nephew and his actions, related how fond he had always been of his sister, and with what tender care he regarded her. Why, he had never embraced nor kissed his sister for fear that he might mar her tender beauty! Frequently he would bring her flowers to cheer the gloomy aspect of the dark room; the blinds were always closed, winter and summer, by the express orders of her brother.

When questioned as to Giulia's life since Gigi's arrest, the old lady told, with no little pride, that her niece was betrothed to a rich gentleman. The latter, she added, had very chivalrously undertaken to maintain her, until the date set for the ceremony, in a manner befitting her beauty, if not her humble origin.

Giulia's picture, resplendent with jewellery, appeared in all the daily papers, and in the short interval of twenty-four hours she became famous. But this hardly pleased her fiancé. Such notoriety reflected on that gentleman's good name and family. Still he loved her, and the discovery of her true family connections—for she had often made covert denials of her humble origin—was to him a disagreeable surprise. But the thought of those long tresses of golden hair made prudence impossible.

The stories that were told and retold in the public resorts, all very interesting but none very truthful, acted as charms on the fickle Milanese populace. Heretofore, no ladies had taken enough interest in the doings of the Merry Company to witness that most extraordinary trial. But the announcement that Giulia was to be one of the witnesses brought them out in great numbers.

The public paid but little attention to the cross-examination of witnesses concerning the past life and deeds of Tonino and Bollg Rosso; nay, at times they gave vent to their impatience by continued stamping. But in the afternoon, when the clerk summoned Giulia to the stand, the court-room became as silent as a graveyard at midnight; the nervous movement of Gigi's chair was plainly audible.

Giulia entered. She was dressed all in black. A veil fell from her

large plumed picture-hat, but it did not effectively conceal her pallor and her swollen eyes.

"You are Giulia Cavalieri, nineteen years of age, living on the Corso Venezia, Milan, and the sister of Gigi Cavalieri, who stands before you?" the judge asked as an opening question. "Be seated!"

She obeyed meekly, but before assuming her seat, attempted to move her chair so that it would face away from the jury. This evoked a hearty laugh from the audience, for it was known that the chair was nailed fast in that position. The unlooked-for mirth frightened Giulia, and she shivered from head to foot.

"Do you know of what your brother stands accused?" continued the judge.

She answered in the affirmative by a slight nod of the head.

"Your brother is accused of thefts, assaults, robberies, and complicity in murder," continued the judge in a rather condescending tone. "Is it not true?"

He stopped, but only for an instant, then suddenly began again:

"And how do you know all this? How was it made known to you? Did he confide in you all his schemes, all his fears, his innumerable attempts? Naturally, you knew all that concerned him whom you loved so well."

Giulia murmured some unintelligible objection.

"Speak louder, if you please."

"I received all my information from my aunt," answered Giulia in a steady voice, "and I read a great deal in the newspapers. Gigi never confided in me."

The judge was decidedly sceptical both by nature and by profession. He scrutinised carefully the expression on Giulia's face, but was unable to find anything indicative of trickery or falsehood.

"Is it true that there existed a great love between you two, and that Gigi was as jealous of you as a tiger of its cubs?"

Giulia turned scarlet in the twinkling of an eye, and made a gesture as if about to answer, but did not utter a word.

"He himself boasts," continued the judge, "of having always watched and spied on you—yes, of having held you a prisoner. Listening to him, one would come to the conclusion that you were his sweetheart and not his sister."

He stopped and cast a knowing glance at the juryman on his left to see whether his cynicism met with approval, but the latter shrugged his shoulders with indifference.

From the general exclamations and gestures it was plainly evident that the judge had expressed the opinion of the court, for it was highly improbable, nay impossible, that such fraternal love could exist in such an abandoned soul. And Giulia's appearance con-

firmed this belief. How could such a golden-haired and delicately formed girl be the sister of that lean and squalid criminal !

But the prosecutor, with all his legal experience, was meeting with little success. The girl had a vague feeling that all the questions asked were not in her brother's favour, and with this in mind, refused to answer whenever she had the faintest suspicion that she would incriminate Gigi. The judge was angered by her taciturnity.

" Yes, I loved him ; I seldom saw him. No, it was my aunt that kept guard over me." Thus she answered most of the questions.

The last unfair question finally caused a rupture between the prosecutor and the lawyer for the defence. And the recorder, contrary to all traditions and time-honoured customs of the court, openly decided in favour of Gigi's lawyers and brought the examination to a close.

Bollo Rosso was so pleased by the quarrel between the lawyers that it was only by painful efforts that he kept from laughing aloud. Finally he lost control of himself—perhaps intentionally—and sent forth such a peal that the whole court turned its attention to him, to the evident displeasure of the judge. He first threatened to adjourn the session, but on second thought had Bollo led back to his cage, and again turned his attention to Giulia.

After a few moments' hesitation, he said :

" The court has no further questions to ask. You may leave the stand."

She arose and cast a furtive glance towards the prisoners' cage. She recognised her brother, who was standing with his face against the bars. She moved in his direction with the intention of offering her hand.

But he, angered by her changed appearance and delicate bearing, shouted savagely at the top of his voice :

" Go away ! Away ! Keep at a distance or I'll choke you ! " And he extended his lean arms far out through the bars, opening and clenching his hand as if strangling the victim.

This show of malignant anger brought forth from the court-room a tempest of hoots intermingled with curses and threats. In a twinkling of an eye, Gigi's brothers in crime were on their feet and striking furiously at the bars of their cages as if wishing to get out among the throng and avenge the hisses directed against their comrade in sorrow, and instantaneously the Merry Company, which hitherto, in harmony with its name, had been so playful and light-hearted, was transformed into a pack of wolves, threatening murder by every move.

" Down with justice ! " Tonino shouted.

" You pack of curs ! " hissed Bollo Rosso, scrambling up the bars of his cage like an ape.

"To the cells! Send them to the cells!" retorted the public.

Pandemonium reigned both within and without the cages when the carbiners rushed into the cages and forced the prisoners back into their seats. Then, by the judge's order, the court-room was cleared and the session adjourned. While the prisoners were being led back to their cells, Gigi's voice, crying, "I have sworn it! I shall strangle her! She cannot escape me!" rose high above the confusion.

This scene had its effect on Giulia. She had seen her brother's gesture, heard the hisses of the audience, and seen the actions of Gigi's companions. Fear had rendered the poor girl well-nigh helpless, but her brother's threat to strangle her took away what little strength remained. For a moment she supported herself by grasping the corridor rail, then her strength failed her completely, her knees collapsed and she would have fallen had not a bystander caught her in time.

Giulia's fiancé, Ugo Feletti, was confined to his bed for several days.

An ecclesiastical journal published beneath Giulia's photograph a sketch representing her as standing with bowed head before the court of assizes. From a church in the distance there issued bolts of lightning, travelling directly towards her head. On these was the inscription, "Equal justice to all!"

Ugo Feletti read eagerly the daily reports of the trial, which made slow progress on account of the bickerings between the lawyers for the defence and prosecution. As soon as he had recovered from his excitement he paid Giulia a visit.

It gave him great pain to see her, all dressed in black and with tear-stained eyes.

"Come," he said, "cheer up! you have been unfortunate in having such relatives, but they are not of your choice; the fates have imposed them on you. Rest assured I do not blame you in the least. All will end well."

"Yes," said Giulia, "but will everything indeed end well?"

"Do not have the least anxiety. If your brother is fortunate, he will escape with a sentence of some thirty years at hard labour!"

The young lady, who during the conversation had been reclining on a divan, leaped to her feet.

"And you dare tell me!" she screamed, "and you dare tell me that with a smile! How can you have the courage to speak thus when the life of my brother is at stake?"

Ugo was rather surprised by this outburst.

"Do I understand," he said calmly, "that you wish him to be set at liberty and again come to live with you?"

"And does that seem strange to you?" said Giulia with biting sarcasm.

The young man looked petulantly out of the window opening over the garden, took a few deep breaths of the perfumed air and then turned to Giulia.

"Let us reason; let us reason without anger," he said. "Did he not threaten to kill you? And if reports do him justice, he is capable of carrying out the threat. Is it not possible that he will kill both of us?"

Giulia merely shrugged her shoulders and resumed her place on the divan. Then an expression of cold indifference spread over her face, the expression that the lover feared more than Gigi's dagger. Therefore, in an attempt to pacify Giulia, he continued in a more respectful and humble strain.

"You cannot deny that he is of a fiery and rash temperament. Of course, it is not his fault, but rather that of the times—nay, any other man placed in his circumstances might have done worse."

"I beg of you not to speak of family affairs," interrupted the girl.

It was in this fashion that she often silenced her friend, but for this once she did not succeed.

"God forbid!" answered Ugo. "I have the greatest respect for your family. Nevertheless, I would rather not see your brother return home immediately. It is a fancy of mine; perhaps a mistaken one, but still worthy of consideration."

"Yes, altogether so," said Giulia, somewhat angrily. "Do you realise your duty towards me? You ought to exert every possible means to secure the freedom of my brother! You ought to approach the lawyers, the jury, even the judge, and make them all feel that there is some rich and powerful man interested in my poor brother's fate. That is your duty, and if you really love me, you will do it!"

Ugo did not seem pleased at this suggestion, and turned as though intending to go, then glanced at Giulia, and the question was decided. Seizing both her hands in his, he said, passionately:

"You may consider the thing as done! I will set myself at work immediately. Surely it is a simple matter, a few threats on one hand and a little flattery on the other, and all will be favourable."

"Quite right," said the girl, not understanding the irony of his words. "Perhaps we can save him. I do not believe what the papers say, nor do I believe that my brother was capable of committing the crimes for which he is being tried. It is impossible that my brother should be a thief."

"I shall go now and get to work at once. I shall come to dine with you this evening and perhaps bring some welcome news."

She smiled sweetly and extended her hand. "She was as happy as ~~my~~ brother were already at liberty. Even thoughts of what sort

of position Ugo could secure for Gigi were flitting through her mind.

"You are very kind!" said she to Ugo, as they reached the door. "God be with you until this evening. I shall expect you."

Poor Giulia! Daily she became more confident in her belief that her brother would be liberated. Nay, she was so positive of this that she decided to be present on the last day of the trial and see him exonerated.

To keep her in good spirits, her fiancé had often invited her to have personal interviews with the lawyers, judge, and jury. And, sad to relate, by lavish use of money, some members of the jury had been won over, but the general opinion was that the members of the Merry Company would all be condemned, and the penalty would be especially heavy for Gigi, Bollo Rosso, and Stringhella, the accomplices in the murder of Matirotti.

Giulia had great difficulty in gaining entrance to the last session of the trial, for an unruly mob thronged the court-room. She was dressed in black, as usual, and her sole companion was a maid.

A lawyer for the prosecution was speaking when Giulia entered, but as she thought the attorneys on both sides were equally disposed in her favour, she turned an attentive ear to his speech. It was a very short time before she caught the import of his animated words. He was denouncing Gigi's mode of life in a furious tirade.

The five thieves sat quiet and sullen behind the bars, their eyes following the gestures of the prosecutor. Gigi alone, at intervals, forced an ironical smile to his lips; but it was a vain effort to appear unconcerned.

Giulia turned to a bystander, and nodding in the direction of the lawyer, asked in a whisper:

"Who is he?"

The tall, lean, and emaciated man looked at her gallantly, but did not utter a word. Giulia did not dare to repeat the question, for suddenly she became aware that the man beside her resembled those in the prisoners' cage, in carriage, dress, and facial expression. She turned to her left, and there, too, her gaze fell upon scraggy and hardened faces. Instinctively she looked behind her, and noticed that the majority of the men were meanly dressed. They chewed tobacco, expectorated on the floor, and watched the proceedings with such ease that they must have been accustomed to similar scenes. Disgusted and frightened by her surroundings, Giulia felt a strong desire to leave the room.

"I think we had better go," she whispered to her maid. In obedience to her lady's wish, the latter had already started toward the door when a renewed outburst of oratory from the prosecutor held Giulia rooted to the spot.

The lawyer, flushed and scowling and with his arm outstretched directly toward the prisoners, was saying :

"Thys, your defence, your sacrilegious falsehoods, have fallen and been destroyed like chaff before the clear light of truth ! Yes, you, Pietro Carenzio, and you, Carlo Pumelli, and you, Gigi Cavalieri, you robbed and murdered the good old Matirotti ! Why ? Because he was too old to defend his wealth, accumulated by years of saving, and which he was using for the relief of the poor. And while you, Gigi Cavalieri, were collecting the plunder, your vile companions were forever extinguishing the precious breath of this life ! And the deed, O members of the jury, was not a result of circumstances, but the outcropping of the wicked brutality that lies within those hearts ! And you, Gigi Cavalieri, having finished your search for gold, administered the death-wound to the innocent victim ! "

" Damnation ! " murmured the lean individual near Giulia, moving his quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other. " He is giving it to them straight from the shoulder ! "

This harangue was followed by others equally strong and damaging to the prisoners' case. Poor Giulia, terrified by the turn that affairs were taking and frightened by the looks and gestures of these about her, again felt the weakness that had made her faint on that former day. Hope for her brother, however, buoyed her spirits.

At last the judge instructed the jury and the session was temporarily suspended. Various were the opinions of the spectators as to what the verdict of the jury would be. Fear had paralysed Giulia to the extent of rendering her incapable of thought.

A consumptive-looking young man said to her in a hollow voice :

" You have seen little that is worth while. There is nothing interesting. You ought to be present when divorce cases are tried. Then the court-room is better than a theatre. Now there is nothing to be seen but those poor fools behind the bars, who let themselves be caught ! " He stopped and cast a disdainful glance in the direction of the cages.

As it was growing dark a few jets of gas were lighted, and they threw a dismal light over the gloomy scene. Soon, however, the jury re-entered amid solemn silence and the foreman read the verdict to the judge.

Giulia was totally ignorant of what was passing, but the consumptive young man came to her assistance.

" What are they going to do now ? " she asked.

" Now ? " queried the youth, who had witnessed many such cases. " The judge will now fix the penalty. It will only be a matter of a few minutes and then we shall be free to go. "

Only a few moments had elapsed before the judge entered and assumed his place. Then he read the sentence.

Gigi Cavalieri, better known as Pivione, Pietro Carenzio, *alias* Jo Rosso, and Carlo Pumelli, *alias* Stringhella, are condemned for life !”

“ Damnation ! ” murmured the tall and lean individual near Giulia.

“ What does all that mean ? ” she asked him in a tone of suppressed excitement. He did not answer.

“ Antonio Stucci and Luigi Mordoni are condemned to serve thirty-two years at hard labour.”

“ What does all that mean ? ” again asked Giulia, this time turning in the direction of the consumptive youth.

“ What does it mean ? ” answered he “ Merely that your brother was given the maximum penalty and must serve for life ! ”

“ But when will they be set free ? ” persisted Giulia, becoming very pale.

“ For life ! For life ! ” reiterated the young man. “ They will never get out ! ”

She stood as if rooted to the spot, and fixedly watched the now empty cage. Giulia had not understood in time to bid her brother good-bye, not even to give him a parting glance. He had gone with the others, never to return.

“ Come, let us go,” begged the frightened maid.

Giulia left the court-room and descended the stairs mechanically. When she had reached the door to the street, she saw Ugo’s private carriage and her fiancé himself beckoning to her.

Her maid assisted her into the vehicle and as soon as it had started, Ugo embraced her and said tenderly :

“ I know all. It is an unfortunate calamity.”

“ I will never see him ! I will never see him again ! ” she interrupted, crying bitterly.

“ Yes, an unfortunate calamity,” repeated the banker.

Giulia’s heartrending sighs affected him painfully and he felt tears rising to his eyes. He could restrain himself no longer. Ugo also was now bewailing Gigi’s fate, although he knew in his innermost soul that his grief was really joy. But the moans issuing from the heart of the one he loved so dearly caused him sincere sorrow.

“ For ever, for ever ! ” she moaned. “ And I did not even bid him adieu for the last time ! Oh, what could the poor boy have done ? ”

Even the maid, although unacquainted with the causes of her lady’s grief, was moved to tears.

“ Ah, what bad company will do ! ” exclaimed Ugo, drying his tears. But he dared say nothing more, for it was with great difficulty that he kept from laughing.

"Are you sure that nothing can be done for him?" continued Giulia.

He did not answer. He was no longer willing to raise her hopes by falsehoods. But to reassure her of his undying affections, he pressed her head closer to his breast with one hand and stroked her hair gently with the other.

When the carriage had halted before her door and all three had alighted, she said to Ugo:

"I was happier then!"

"Then? When?" asked the banker as he escorted her to the door.

"Then, when I lived with my aunt, in that hut outside the Porta Romana. Yes, I was poor, but I worked and knew nothing of the world's wickedness. Then Gigi used to bring me flowers."

"But he used to steal," added Ugo.

"I knew nothing of that. I was happy, yes, truly happy."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Messrs. CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, New York and London.

For permission to use Mrs. Edith Wharton's translations of "It Snows" by Enrico Castelnuovo, and "A Great Day" by Gabriele d'Annunzio, and the translation of D'Annunzio's "San Pantaleone" by George McLean Harper.

To the WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD., London and Felling-on-Tyne.

For the translations by A. Werner of Castelnuovo's "The Theorem of Pythagoras," Capuana's "The Rival Earthquakes," "Quacquarà," Verga's "The War of the Saints," Pratesi's "Doctor Phoebeus," and D'Annunzio's "Maestro Peppe's Magic," here reprinted by arrangement from *The Humour of Italy*

To Messrs. CHATTO & WINDUS, St. Martin's Lane, London.

For permission to reprint, in arrangement with the Misses Helen and Alice Zimmern, the translators, the story "Separation," by Farina, from *Half-Hours with Foreign Novelists*, published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

To Messrs. GEORGE NEWNES, LTD., London.

For the use of the translation of Mathilde Serao's "An Intervention" from the *Strand Magazine*.

